CAREER CONTINGENCIES OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Problem Statement 2

Literature Review 3

Theoretical Stance 7

Functionalism 7

Conflict Theory 8

Research Setting 12

Methodology 13

II. METHODS 16

Biography of the Research Project 16

Perspective 21

Interviewing 23

Focused interviews 24

Establishment of rapport 25

Interview routine 28

Methods used to insure reliability 33

III. THE PROCESSES INVOLVED IN BECOMING A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER 37

Types of Turning Points 38

Retirement from the military 38

Dissatisfactions with previous jobs 40

CHAPTER PAGE

Being laid off 42

Being employed in state corrections as a stop gap measure. 44

Turning points experienced by female officers. 45

IV. SOCIALIZATION. 51

Formal Training At Rocky Hill. 52

Formal Training At Oswald. 54

Reality Shock. 60

Informal Socialization 62

Informal socialization by other officers 63

Dealing with fellow officers 65

Dealing with the inmates 69

Testing. 71

V. THE ROLE OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER. 76

Development Of An Occupational Self-Image. 76

Symbols Which Represents the Officers Authority. 79

Territorial symbols that represent an officers authority 84

Coping With The Institutional Environment. 85

Bureaucratic Management. 86

CHAPTER PAGE

Humor. 87

Rationalization. 88

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS. 91

Restatement of the Study 91

Variations From Past Research. 95

Agreement With Past Research 98

Avenues For Future Research 102

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 103

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of prisons in America, social critics, politicians, and penologists have espoused prison reform. At the same time, social scientists also have had a keen interest in the prison inmate. The overriding concern for the inmate stems from the desire on the part of society to correct the norm violator. Correctional literature abounds with studies focusing on inmate resocialization, homosexuality, or recidivism rates. If not on the inmate, the focus is upon the organization, structure or management of the penitentiary. The works of Clemmer (1940) or Sykes (1958) are classics along these lines.

Ironically the individual who interacts most frequently with inmates on a one to one basis-the correctional officer-has not been analyzed in any systematic manner. Referred to by the inmates as a hack, screw, or the heat, penologists seem to have forgotten about the correctional officer.

Whereas other correctional officers, such as the police have received considerable attention from social scientists (for example, Niederhoffer, 1967; Skolnick, 1969; Reiss, 1971), correctional officers in prisons are mentioned stereotypically, if at all, as ignorant, sadistic, brutal or resistant to change. Empathy with the correctional officer's role in a hostile, negative environment is rare. Oswald (1972: 20) claims "the media...all too often...publicize that inmates

are abused, yet the frequent cup of urine or kindly epithets verbalized towards staff is seldom expressed."

Problem Statement

Correctional officers have been neglected in research conducted by social scientists. Sommer (1976: 72) claims:

> Guards and other lower echelon employees feel that they are not properly understood...

Therefore, this paper seeks to provide insight into how the correctional officer views himself and his job. The careers of officers will be traced in order to ascertain the ways in which they have changed over a period of months or years. Career for the purposes of this thesis can be interpreted as an orderly temporal sequence (Denzin, 1970: 267). A historical account of prison guards in american society is not intended.

The careers of prison guards will be divided into three stages. First, we will examine the period of time prior to the individual becoming an officer. Inquiries will be made into the previous work records of officers. These records may provide an indication of the motivational forces lying behind the decision to become a correctional officer. The second stage will examine the socialization process officers undergo in order to learn the "ropes". Data will be obtained on whether or not officers perceive the job as dangerous, exciting, boring, and whether or not their expectations have been fulfilled. Finally we will explore the guard role. The guard role is intended to mean correctional

officers' self perceptions and how they see themselves in relation to associates, friends and relatives. Particular attention will be paid to the manner in which officers deal with the popular imagery of their occupation, specifically how correctional officers neutralize stereotypes that are lodged on their selves.

Literature Review

As previously indicated, literature examining the roles of correctional officers is rare. After scrutinizing the written material concerning officers, three themes have emerged: 1) popular conceptions of officers; 2) the tasks officers carry out in prison; and, 3) the ways in which officers perceive civilians.

First there are the popular conceptions and stereotypes that society has of correctional officers. Guards are perceived to be illiterate, unkemp, and unenlightened. Frequently they are considered to be brutally sadistic. Mitford (1974) is unforgiving in her account of officers:

> The inmates' charges amount to a strong indictment of the prison's employees on all levels as cruel, vindictive, dangerous men.

Mitford (1974: 289-291) also describes Attica's aftermath as an orgy of brutality. Officers are labeled villains while the inmates remain victims (Sommer, 1976).

Correctional officers in such popular movies as "Cool Hand Luke", "The Glass House", and "The Longest Yard" are portrayed as inhuman and

callous. These characterizations carry over into the "real" world and probably help to solidify society's negative view of officers. Jacobs and Retsky (1975: 52) point this out:

> Friends do not know what to make of the prevailing belief that guards are sadistic, corrupt, stupid, and incompetent.

Society frowns on the occupation of prison guard. The correctional officer occupies a low status within the community (Jacobs and Retsky, 1975: 53-55). Society, through its division of labor, requires that the dirty work (Hughes, 1958) of handling norm violaters be performed by someone. Occupations that are considered to be dirty work, or are a low status occupation, are characterized by low pay, little chance of upward mobility, simple methods of hiring and training, powerlessness to express unique abilities, and high turnover rates (Ritzer, 1972: 221-260; Jacobs and Retsky, 1975: 53). In light of this model, there can be no doubt that correctional officers are performing a low status occupation with little social recognition (Zimbardo, 1971).

Clemmer (1940: 183) sees guards as having the same personality problems as inmates. He implicitly demonstrates a belief in the low intelligence of the line officer. In explicit terms, Cressey (1961) describes guards as being unfit for any type of social or psychiatric work. Even if training were available the implication is that these lower echelon staff could not be trained. Officers are sometimes portrayed as overgrown boy scouts. Ragen (1962) suggests that a guard must have good moral breeding, temperament, physical fitness and poise.

In addition, The Manual of Correctional Standards (1966) has given more consideration to standards for bookshelves than to officers.

The second theme in the literature focuses upon tasks officers carry out within the penitentiary. Jacobs and Retsky (1975), first to provide a real description of guards, furnish insight into the guard's role. These authors see officers as occupying a unique position. While officers are concerned with internal threats regarding the prison and its management, Brink's guards, military sentinels, and night watchmen are concerned with external threats to the objects they are protecting. That is correctional officers usually do not have to worry about people breaking into prison only about people trying to escape.[1]

To insure that instituional order is maintained, officers employ discipline and conduct searches and shakedowns (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Fox, 1972). Basically being a guard is a people-processing job in which clothes must be distributed, bathing and disinfecting completed, food and medicine and other fundamental needs are supplied (Goffman, 1961). Within a total institution, inmates must be managed and this is the job of the correctional officer.

Philip Zimbardo (1971: 6) in his classic "The Psychological Power and Pathology of Imprisonment" stated that:

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[1]Although there are a few cases of where people have used a helicopter to break an inmate out, the officer's concern for the most part is with stopping inmates trying to break out.

> Many people, perhaps the majority, can be made to do almost anything when put into psychologically compelling situations regardless of their morals, values, ethics, attitudes, beliefs, or personal convictions.

Furthermore he states:

> The mere act of assigning labels to people, such as "prisoners" and "guards" and putting them into a situation where those labels acquirevalidity and meaning, is sufficient to elicit pathological behavior. (Zimbardo, 1971: 6-7).

Zimbardo was not the first person to discover the effects of total institutions upon their participants. Joseph Roucek (1935: 151) concluded his dated, but nevertheless invaluable study of guards with:

> There is no question that their pay is low, the hours long, the chances for advancement small, the work is carried on under irksome and confining conditions, and the lack of ordinary human relations on duty produces hard boiled behavior.

Soledad Brother George Jackson is also aware of how the prison affects guards:

> ....The days and months that a guard has to spend on the ground are what destroys anything at all that was social about him before. (Somer, 1976: 73)

The last theme prevalent in the literature deals with the ways officers perceive civilians. In these reports (Wicks, 1974) guards are suspicious and fearful of outsiders who are viewed as undermining their power in dealing with the inmates. The primary outsiders are legislators who enact bills for the protection of inmate rights. Second, the press is feared because of its watchdog attitude concerning prison affairs, especially the possibility of guard brutality. Officers must be more aware of their actions towards inmates or the press will

interpret:

> brutality as proof of the generalization that correctional officers, on the whole, are sadistic (Wicks, 1974: 32).

Third, are the prison reformers, who are thought, by the guards, to be "nigger lovers" (Sommers, 1976). In the literature, officers are sometimes held responsible for subverting programs and plotting against the best efforts of penology (Jacobs and Retsky, 1975: 55). Accordingly the penitentiary remains the domain of guards and trespassers in their area are not tolerated.

Theoretical Stance

Theoretical interpretations of correctional officers are non-existent. One can only infer as to why some people and not others become officers. Perhaps a psychologist would stress sadistic or authoritarian personality types. A sociologist might point to inadequate education and job skills as conducive factors in becoming a prison guard. Due to the paucity of theory, three sociological theories will be discussed and evaluated as to how each would interpret guard behavior.

Functionalism

Sociologists with a functionalist orientation view:

> society as a system of integrated parts...These parts contribute to the maintenance of social harmony (Curran, 1977: 11).

Society is seen as an organic whole. All parts of society such as religion, crime and the family are interrelated. That is, each part helps to maintain the whole.

Poverty, for example, plays an important function within society. Poor people provide a source of cheap labor; the poor are in need of various social services which create jobs for police, social or welfare workers (Gans, 1972).

For a functionalist, crime is a necessary element within society. It is necessary for two reasons. First, norm violators contribute to group solidarity. Society bands together in an effort to deal with deviants. Crime also functions to create jobs. Norm violation aids in employment of police officers, court and correctional personnel. Functionalists view correctional officers as performing a "needed" function. That function is the management of institutions for deviants. Although functionalism can account for why there are correctional officers, it fails to consider the socializing and interactive processes that assist an individual in choosing a career in corrections. Functionalism fails to take into consideration how a person "learns the ropes". Due to this lack of concern for individual contingencies, functionalism is deemed not suitable for this paper.

Conflict Theory

The emphasis in conflict theory is upon social change. Conflict theorists:

> believe that change and adaptation result from conflict between groups (Curran, 1977: 11).

Functionalism's concern for order is rejected. Rather, attention is given to the ongoing struggle for power. Advocates of this model emphasize relationships between those who have power (haves) and those

that do not (have nots).

Conflict theorists would perceive officers as coming from the lower and working class. It follows that these lower classes lack power. Power in the sense of being able to control and make decisions which are of importance to their lives. Upper classes in society have limited the lower classes' chances for upward mobility through discriminatory hiring practices; (requiring college degrees) as well as educational chances (high entrance exam scores and large tuitions). In other words, individuals become officers not because they have a choice. Rather they have no alternatives for employment.

Conflict theory, like functionalism, can account for why there are correctional officers. But it is not concerned with the interactive processes involved in job selection or "learning the ropes." Both imply an involuntary choice in becoming an officer; both fail to consider an individual's self conception. Neither theoretical stance can deal with the possibility of stages involved in becoming a correctional officer. It is for these reasons that this thesis on correctional officers will employ a symbolic interactionist sequential model to analyze the stages within an officer's career.

Strauss (1959) asserts that people pass through certain statuses or experience turning points during their life times. He (1959: 94) describes a process in which:

> said candidate has followed the predicted and prescribed path of experience and has gotten to the desired point...come to the platform and receive your diploma.

Implicit in this statement is the idea of "development". Development refers to:

> A progressive movement wherein the beginning, middle, and end bear some discernible relationship to each other (Strauss, 1959: 89).

Contained within the notion of development is temporality:

> No one is assigned, nor may he assume, a position or status forever (Strauss, 1959: 124).

Most human activity can be perceived as a series of stages. In order to progress from stage to stage (child to adolescent for instance), certain social factors must be learned. Much research on status passage and socialization into roles has been in the area of deviance. A few examples of works within this research vein will follow.

Heyl (1977) in her account of prostitutes describes a process where girls are taught by a madam to be effective house prostitutes. Girls are socialized into the role through tape recorded lessons and by one to one sessions with the madam. Students receive guidance in areas dealing with sexual skills and how to interact with the "johns". Communication is an essential part of being a prostitute. If the girl can learn how to communicate effectively she can then build up a successful clientele. Most important for the girls is the instruction in hustling. The madam shows the girls the ways in which clientele can be persuaded into spending more money for other sexual treats.

Howard Becker (1973: 108) describes the manner in which jazz musicians develop their career:

> A successful career may be viewed as a series of steps, each one a sequence of sponsorship, successful performance, and the building up of relationships at each new level.

Musicians in order to obtain the prestigious positions within the field are required, like prostitutes, to learn the appropriate means, For jazz musicians, this entails getting to know the right people and developing friendships with them. Membership in cliques is also crucial to steady employment. Once these two above criteria are met, job security follows. These cliques and friendships with important people pave the way for musicians to move up through the ranks and become established in the business. Cliques provide the means to secure top jobs. In sum, jazz musicians learn the informal rules of gaining membership in cliques before learning the formal structure of rising up through the ranks.

Becker (1973: 41-53) employs a processual model in his classic analysis of becoming a marijuana smoker. Users pass through, and learn certain elements in three decisive stages. First, novices learn to smoke the drug in a specific manner to produce an effect. "Old timers" instruct novices in proper inhalation techniques to enhance sensations. Next, beginners learn to recognize effects and connect them to smoking the drug. Last, novices must learn to enjoy the sensations experienced.

Police, similar to correctional officers, also participate in a learning process. Niederhoffer (1969: 45-46) describes the training academy in which new recruits receive formal training in weaponry, law and human relations. Police rookies, like jazz musicians and prostitutes,

are schooled in how to act in specific situations.

This paper will attempt to construct a sequential developmental model which will explain and describe how a person becomes and is socialized into the role of prison guard.

Research Setting

This project was conducted at two maximum security institutions for men. These midwestern penitentiaries, for purposes of confidentiality, have been referred to as Rocky Hill and Oswald State penitentiaries. Approximately one hundred and eighty and three hundred correctional officers are employed by each institution respectively.

By law, Rocky Hill requires its officers to undergo annual training sessions in addition to the basic training undergone when the people are first hired. Training sessions are initiated throughout the year. Approximately fifteen to twenty officers from all shifts attend each session. This course of eighty hours is designed to inform officers of new developments in such areas as communication skills, weaponry and riot tactics, correctional officer and inmate rights, and first aid. Correlated with new developments is the notion of sharpening up skills that have already been learned previously while on the job. The training session resembles a high school in which at every hour a new topic is covered. Training is rapidly paced and multifaceted. Institutional training officers, with input from the staff psychologist, are in charge of the program.

The research was carried out within this refresher course for correctional officers. The strategy was to participate in the training session that began January third and ended January thirteenth. On the first day of training the director of the institution introduced this researcher to the class as a student writing a master's thesis on correctional officers. The director informed the class of my background and pointed out my experience as being a former correctional officer in a large midwestern state penitentiary.

By mingling with officers during the training session, rapport was established. This is crucial to the project. Through rapport the researcher was in a strong position to interview the officers and obtain adequate results. Schatzman and Strauss (1973: 5) emphasize that:

> For the naturally-oriented humanist, the choice of method is virtually a logical imperative. The researcher must get close to the people whom he studies; he understands that their actions are best comprehended when observed on the spot - in the natural, ongoing environment where they live and work.

The research setting at Oswald employed a more formal plan. Here the researcher, with the deputy warden's assistance, set up a special room at the institution for the purpose of interviewing between seven and ten correctional officers.

Methodology

The underlying methodological stance of this paper is that the researcher must get close to the world of the subject. As Blumer (1969: 48) has written:

> The determination of problems, concepts, research technique and theoretical schemes should be done by direct examination of the actual empirical social world rather than by working with a simulation of that world, or with a preset model of that world derived from a few scattered observations of it, or with a picture of that world fashioned in advance...

Once this researcher's position as an outside observer/interviewer at Rocky Hill had been established each officer was approached for an interview. If the interview was granted, a request was made to have the interview conducted at the interviewee's home. In this way the interviewee would be on his or her own turf. The home was considered to be more conducive to a focused interview than was the work setting. In this way the interview would take place in a more relaxed and comfortable environment which may help the subject to "open up" to questions.

Correctional officers at Rocky Hill State Penitentiary number around 180. Of that total population the seventeen individuals who were the participants in one training session were interviewed.

The instrument used for the collection of data was the focused interview. Questions concerning attitudes towards the job, inmates and personal background were posed.

Before the interview began, each interviewee was asked, to complete a form designed to obtain needed demographic data. The usual information of age, race, sex, military experience, and job history was requested. In addition, an inquiry was made into where the interviewee stands on certain issues of today like the decriminalization of pot,

heroin, welfare, homosexuality, and abortion. Once this information was obtained, questions were posed about the attitudes correctional officers have towards their job, inmates, possible danger from the job, thoughts about what causes crime, and so forth.

A tape recorder was used whenever possible. Prior to any taping or interviewing each individual was informed that all information obtained would remain confidential. Each person was intstucted to feel free not to answer all or part of the questionnaire. To further ensure anonymity, designated numbers replaced the names of each person. The problems and ethical issues involved with making tape recordings are discussed in the following chapter. If the interviewee refused to be taped, all information was taken by hand and catalogued accordingly.

The data collection procedure employed at Oswald was the focused interview. Tape recordings were not planned for this institution. It was believed that the use of a tape recorder in the institutional setting at Oswald would have been a hinderance to obtaining accurate information. At Rocky Hill personal contact (entree) was established during the training session. This was not the situation at Oswald. Here the researcher was meeting the interviewees for the first time. Rapport was limited. The problems involved with tape recording are discussed further in Chapter II.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

This chapter will describe the events which led to the formation of this research project and the methods used to carry it out. The following topics will be discussed: 1) biography of the research project; 2) perspective or theoretical strategies used to gather data; 3) interviewing; and, 4) characteristics of the population interviewed.

Biography of the Research Project[1]

The researcher has always had a longstanding interest in the areas of deviance and corrections. To pursue these interests I chose to attend graduate school.

In the Fall of 1976, or my first semester in graduate school, I was a teaching assistant in an Introduction to Sociology class. One of my numerous responsibilities included the presentation of an occasional lecture. One of these lectures turned out to be the initial step leading to this project.

During my undergraduate years, I participated in an internship at a coed juvenile institution. My experience at this institution formed the basis for one of my lectures while a T.A. After this lecture a male student approached me and complimented me on my lecture. We talked for awhile over a cup of coffee. The student, Larry, pointed out that he had some "indirect" experience in corrections. Larry stated

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[1](Klockars, 1974: 197)

that Beth's (his wife) father is the Deputy Warden at Oswald State Penitentiary. The significance of this relevation was not realized until after Christmas Vacation. In the meantime Larry and I became good friends.

I attended an intersession course with Larry and Beth. Larry arranged for me to meet with his father-in-law to find out about summer employment at the penitentiary.

The first weekend of Spring semester Larry, Beth, a friend of theirs, and myself drove to his father-in-law's house. Later that day, the Deputy Warden (Carl) arrived and Larry introduced everyone. After supper Carl asked if I would like to "go inside" the penitentiary. I answered yes immediately. Carl gave me the grand tour, and even introduced me to the warden. About two hours later we went home for the night. Once at home I asked Carl if there was any possibility of working as an officer for the summer. Carl asked me to write a letter in April stating when I could be available; then he would make the necessary arrangements for my employment.

During Spring semester I enrolled in a class described as Societal Reactions to Deviance. This course required a project that was worth one third of the overall grade. At this time I was interested in prison homosexuality and turned in a proposal to research this topic. Since I would be working as an officer, the prison would be an ideal setting for this research.

In April, I wrote the Deputy Warden a letter stating I would be available for work in May. Arrangements were made and I started a one week training session for incoming officers beginning June 1st.

While working at the penitentiary, I realized that researching prison homosexuality would entail more than one summer's work. Beside the time factor, this topic had already been well researched. Therefore a more "reasonable" area of interest was sought. Although abandoning my initial interests was a set back, all was not lost. While pouring through my log book entries I noticed a pattern in the conversations among officers. These officers consistently claimed that there were difficulties in being correctional officers because of low pay and the inmates having "too many rights." I began gathering data on correctional officers.

I collected the data as an observer, whose true identity as a researcher was unknown to the other officers (Gold, 1969: 33-34). The main advantage of this role is that the researcher is able to view many more situations and be involved in different types of interactions than the researcher who takes another role (Warren, 1972: 156). Paralleling this is the notion that by becoming an officer other officers would act towards me on the basis of being just another officer (member).

Stating my research aims to the prison administration prior to my employment would lead to antagonism. In other words, by stating my aims beforehand, I felt the institution would have tried to control what

I saw, or regarded me as a snoop (Caroll, 1974: 11; Lofland, 1971: 96). Remaining covert was out of necessity, because I also perceived officers to be similar to policemen where:

> To the police, social scientist doubtless represents the critical, carping public and the liberal fringe (Manning, 1972: 240-246).

By remaining covert, I obtained data on the hierarchical structure of the prison, officers' duties and how officers perceived their job. In addition to this data I secured data on guard-inmate relations and what it is like to be an officer working in a penitentiary.

I left the penitentiary in mid-August to complete the paper for Societal Reactions class. While conducting a literature review on correctional officers, I noticed a scarcity of published material. The literature that was found portrayed officers as sadistic and brutal. My own personal experiences conflicted with these accounts and provided the impetus for this thesis.

By the fall of 1977, I was attempting to find some way to carry out research on correctional officers. Then one day in late October, I recognized a person waiting in the sociology officer as a correctional officer who the year before gave a guest lecture on prisons in one of my corrections classes. I introduced myself and informed him (Joe) of my employment at Oswald. We exchanged "war stories" for about one hour and arranged to see each other the following morning in my office. That morning, I told Joe about my ideas for research on officers. He agreed

that more attention should be given to the man on the line. Joe told me that he was no longer an officer, but a unit team member, a person responsible for classifying "new recruits" (inmates). He gave me his address at the prison where I could write him.

Before Thanksgiving vacation I wrote Joe a letter describing my difficulties in trying to find a setting to research officers. Joe responded that he had set everything up for me to interview some officers. He pointed out that an eighty hour training course was scheduled for January third through January thirteenth. It was a course that all correctional officers must complete. If I could come to Rocky Hill during these two weeks I could interview officers participating in the class. It was suggested by one of my thesis committee members that I actually participate in the training session in order to establish rapport with the officers.

After Thanksgiving vacation I contacted Joe to see if participating in the session was possible. Three weeks later the request was approved, on the condition that the project be discussed with the Director. I agreed to this, discussed my project with the Director, and was given approval.

After this meeting, Joe brought me over to the Training Captain's office. After the introductions were made, the Captain asked where I would be staying. I informed him that any hotel would be fine. The Captain asked if I would like to stay at his house during the training

session - I accepted.

In February, 1978, I called the Deputy Warden (Carl) at Oswald to find out if arrangements could be made to interview some of his officers. Several weeks, and telephone calls later, Carl had arranged for me to interview officers from March 29 through March 31, 1978.

Perspective

Whereas the perspective taken in this thesis follows closely the symbolic interactionist perspective, not all the authors cited here accept the basic tenets of symbolic interactionism. The perspective of this thesis grows out of a specific body of literature having certain themes in common.

The first theme is the use of analytic induction in the analysis of data. Denzin (1970) defines analytic induction as a progressive formulation and testing of hypotheses through the observational process. In analyzing the data, analytic induction allows the model to emerge from the subjects' definition of the world. Entering the social setting with a preformed model is seen as restricting the researcher into looking only for positive cases to give the preformed theory credibility. Induction is also in keeping with the viewpoints of Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The second theme of this body of literature is the direct examination of the subject's world by the researcher. Lofland (1971: 7)

states:

> The sociological researcher of a qualitative humanistic bent, then seeks, neither purely novelistic reportage nor purely abstract conceptualizing. His aim is judiciously to combine them, providing the vividness of "what it's like" and an appropriate degree of economy and clarity.

Qualitative endeavors employ a strategy of going to the field and actively participating in the subject's world. Blumer (1969: 71) summarizes this position:

> Symbolic interactionism is a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human conduct. Its empirical world is the natural world of such group life and conduct. It lodges its problems in this natural world, conducts its studies in it and derives its interpretations from such naturalistic studies.

The third and last theme of this body of literature is the view of humans as capable of cognition and creation. Blumer (1967: 55) points out that human beings are not mere responding organisms that can be studied like natural phenomena. Rather humans are acting organisms and capable of forging lines of action.

Methods of data collection and analysis, such as structured interviews, questionnaires and multivariate analysis are incapable of getting at the negotiable process which takes place in human action. These approaches fail to consider the interactive or negotiation processes that humans employ in constructing their everyday realities. The method chosen for this project attempts to recognize the qualitative differences between humans and the natural world. In other words, the approach takes into account that humans have consciousness and are

capable of self reflective behavior.

Interviewing

Once in the field, certain interviewing techniques and strategies were employed in eliciting information from the interviewees. These techniques and strategies and the rationales behind them now will be discussed. This section may be divided into five parts: 1) focused interviews; 2) establishment of rapport; 3) the interview routine; 4) the interview strategy; and, 5) methods used to insure reliability.

According to Benny and Hughes (1970: 190-191) interviewing is the trademark of sociology. Sociologists are by and large interviewers where the act of interviewing is any face to face conversational exchange where one person elicits information from another (Denzin, 1970: 186; Lofland, 1971: 75-77). However, there are three major types of interviews that researchers can employ (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973: 83-87). The first type is the highly structured interview, where the wording and order of all questions is identical for each respondent (Denzin, 1970: 123). Second, is the unstructured interview. This variety employs neither a fixed set of questions or a predetermined order for asking questions (Denzin, 1970: 186).

From these two descriptions it seems as though interviews are either highly structured or unstructured. The focused interview borrows strategies from both structured and unstructured interviews. In this variety of interview, the researcher requires certain information from

all subjects but the ordering and phrasing of each question is redefined to fit the attributes of each subject (Denzin, 1970: 125).

Focused interviews. In interviewing correctional officers it was concluded that focused interviews would best elicit the information being sought. According to Merton and Kendall (1946: 541), focused interviews are intended to determine the responses of individuals in a situation previously examined by the researcher. Although focused interviews may be similar to other types of interviewing techniques, Merton and Kendall point to four differing characteristics. Each of these characteristics will be discussed and shown how they relate to this project.

First of all, subjects being interviewed have been, or are involved in the same situation. That is the respondents for this project (correctional officers) all participate in the same work environment, a penitentiary.

Second, the situation or setting under study has been previously analyzed by the researcher. In addition to library research, the researcher was employed as a correctional officer. This first hand experience allowed the investigator to experience the prison world as officers experience it.

Third, based on this previous experience, an interview guide was

developed specifying the major areas of inquiry. First hand experience helped provide the necessary insight to probe into the officers' job histories, socialization processes, and self-conceptions.

Fourth, the interview itself is focused on the subjective experience of persons exposed to the preanalyzed situation. Information was elicited on the sujectively perceived factors which led each officer to apply for the correctional officer job, the interactive processes involved in socialization into the role of correctional officer, and what it is "like" to be a correctional officer.

Establishment of rapport. In this section I would like to describe how rapport with the officers of Rocky Hill and Oswald State Penitentiaries was established.

The first day at Rocky Hill, I attended the first training session. Each person in the class was asked to introduce himself. I introduced myself and told the officers I was working on a Masters Degree at KSU and had worked at Oswald State Penitentiary during the previous summer. I informed the class that my purpose for participating in the program was to conduct research on prison guards. I pointed out that most research conducted in prisons focused on the inmate. Instead, I wanted to obtain information on officers and what it is like to be a prison guard.

After lunch the institutional lawyer lectured the class on legal rights of inmates. During this lecture I raised a few questions

regarding religious freedoms of inmates. The lawyer and class discussed this point at length. Not only did this help to make me visible to the class, it showed the officers that I was interested in what was going on. Thus, I made it a habit to ask one question, or more, in every class.

My role in conducting this research was that of an interested outside observer (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1969: 89-103). Not only did I ask questions in class, I engaged in "small talk" with each officer to let the officer know I was interested in him.

Since I had experience as a guard, I knew the guard "vocabulary" and could carry out a conversation on their terms. In spite of this experience I still played dumb where:

> In being incompetent (but otherwise polite and easy to get along with) the observer easily assumed the role of one who has to be taught (Lofland, 1971: 100-101).

By asking obvious questions, the officers relied upon their "expertise" and "filled me in."

Before the first day was over, the officers and I were on a first name basis. A few officers "opened up" and discussed at length their feelings about the job. Instead of pulling out a notebook and jotting down these conversations, I remembered, and wrote down later, key phrases so that they could be recorded in my log book afterwards. The candidness of these officers indicated to me that information would not be difficult to obtain.

The second day of the session proved even more interesting in terms of rapport-building. In the morning a lieutenant came to give the class a lecture on gun towers. He stated that he knew everyone in class except me. I explained to him what the project was about, to which he said "you are nosy." I pointed out, however, that I was not snooping or trying to uncover the unusual. Then some officers came to my defense and assured the lieutenant I was not "nosy". I later found out that the lieutenant was not highly regarded by the officers in the first place. Following this exchange, rapport was established.

I had begun the training session by engaging in small talk with the officers. This was done mainly to show the officers that I was genuinely interested in them as individuals. Believing that faking ignorance would have been a mistake, I played the role of an interested observer. My experiences as a prison guard offered me a starting point with which to engage in conversations with the officers. Familiarity with the vocabulary of guards allowed me to carry out conversations with them on their own terms.

Development of rapport at Oswald did not occur in any type of group setting. In fact, I was meeting these officers for the first time. The only method of building rapport was relying upon my work experience at Oswald the previous summer. I described for each officer interviewed some of the situations that I had experienced as an officer. Because I had experienced some of the same situations (breaking up

fights, cell house work, etc.) these officers experience everyday, we shared a common experience and were not total strangers.

Interview routine. In analyzing the interview routine for each institution, the following three topics will be covered: 1) planning the interviews; 2) location of the interviews; and, 3) when the interviews occurred.

Having established rapport, on the third day of the session I approached six different officers individually and requested interviews. Not one refused and six interview dates were set for the following week. By Friday (the fifth day) seventeen interview dates had been arranged. Twelve of the interviews occurred in the officers' homes since it provided a casual atmosphere where the officers would open up. The remaining five interviews took place at the officers' assembly room within the institution.

These other five interviews were not conducted in the homes in order to conserve time. It was not possible to interview all seventeen officers in their own homes in eight days. Besides the time factor, two of these five officers held second jobs and therefore were not available after class.

Now that the interviews were arranged and a location determined, a suitable time had to be decided upon. If the interview took place within the institution, the training officer excused the officer from the training class so that the interview could be conducted.

"Home" interviews were handled in two ways. First, arrangements were made so that I could follow the subject to his home after class. Seven interviews were planned in this manner. Second, arrangements were made to administer the interviews on the weekend of January 7 and 8. The interviewees gave me directions to get to their home and I arrived at a specified time. Five interviews were executed in this fashion.

The situation at the second penitentiary in which interviews were conducted, Oswald, was more structured and depended upon the day shift captain's assistance for the selection of officers to be interviewed. That is, upon arrival at the prison, (I stayed with the Deputy Warden) I went directly to the day shift captain's office (Captain's Shack). There we decided upon the officers I was going to interview that day. Once this decision was made, the captain called the first subject and told him to come to his office. When the officer arrived the captain introduced us and I informed that officer of my intentions. All eight interviews followed this format.

All eight interviews occurred within the prison (over 3 days) at such locations as the officers' assembly room, the yard, and people's offices.

Although rapport was minimal as mentioned earlier, these interviews produced information that supported the data I received at Rocky Hill. I would like now to discuss if and how, the interview setting affected the information obtained from the interviewees.

The interview setting at Rocky Hill produced no observable effects upon data elicited from the respondents. Rapport had been established and I was a trusted member of the class. Even when I asked the officers about such "touchy" subjects as snitching or the reasons they disliked the administration, the officers did not hesitate to "fill me in."[2] Some officers were eager to tell me anything about prison operations. The following factors of rapport, my own work experience, and conversations with informants made it possible for me to tell whether or not an officer was "throwing me a line".

However, the situation at Oswald was slightly different because all interviews occurred at the prison. Rapport was minimal, because I was meeting these officers for the first time. Due to my "newness", the officers were hesitant in answering the same "touchy" questions mentioned earlier. The officers merely agreed that the prison had some "inhouse" problems but examples were not provided. Inspite of this hesitancy, I obtained data supporting that received at Rocky Hill. In conclusion the interview setting only slightly affected the data I obtained. But at all times whether the questions were controversial or not, I relied upon my own personal experience and conversations with informants to ensure the information was trustworthy.

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[2]Snitching refers to one officer informing on another in exchange for favoritism from supervisors. This topic will be examined further in the next chapter.

Interview strategy. Prior to interviewing, each respondent was informed that all information would be kept confidential. Afterwards the purposes of my research were explained. If there were no questions, the interview began.

Questions focusing on the officer's background such as race, sex, and marital status were asked first. The following questions concerned the family background of the person. I wanted to determine if the man came from a close family which did things together often or a broken family, etc. Then focus shifted to the individual's family through marriage to find out again how close the family was. If the individual was not married, I probed to find out why.

Next, the individual was asked about his educational experiences with particular attention to whether or not high shcool was finished. I probed further in an effort to obtain information regarding college credits. I also questioned these individuals to ascertain which subjects they particularly liked in school. I also asked if the person had participated in any organized sports. Next I talked with the person about his or her own favorite hobbies and pastimes. By focusing on such topics as past educational accomplishments, favorite hobbies and past-times, I hoped to demonstrate to the person that I was interested in him as an individual.

Once this background information was obtained, I had the individual, as best he could, furnish an account of what happened (job-wise) to him after leaving high school. The individual described

his work history and factors which led to his filling out an application for prison work. After this, the remainder of the interview centered on the individual's life as a correctional officer.

I tried in all cases to take down a verbatim account of the individual's answers to my questions. This was a very difficult task to accomplish. Knowing this was going to be a problem I used a tape recorder as a safeguard. The first eight interviews were taped. Before taping, I assured the interviewee that these tapes would be kept in complete confidence.

In fact, I informed each respondent that the tapes would be destroyed after the thesis was completed.

Only eight interviews were taped because carrying around the tapes and recorder proved to be a burden. There were also mechanical problems with the recorder. Before my first interview occurred, I ran a few test runs to make sure the recorder ran and recorded properly. Inspite of these tests, the recorder malfunctioned and recorded thirty minutes of the interview at a very low sound level. During another interview, the recorder emitted a loud squeaking noise so I stopped the interview and attempted to correct the problem. Later I found out portions of the interview were recorded in a slower speed. In another instance I ran out of tapes and had to borrow extra tapes from the interviewee.

The use of the recorder during the interviews did not upset the

respondents, for rapport had already been established with the officers. The interviewees understood the researcher's desire for accuracy and knew that the information recorded would be kept confidential and anonymity would be protected (True and True, 1977: 137-138). Even when I asked the same "touchy" questions mentioned earlier, the respondents explained the questions in detail. They were not afraid to be taped. Through comparison, I concluded that information obtained in recorded interviews supported that of non-recorded interviews.

Methods used to insure reliability. To establish the credibility of a research project is a difficult task indeed. Quantitative researchers characteristically demonstrate the validity of their work through statistical measures. This project, a qualitative endeavor, will not rely upon statistics for analysis.

According to Denzin (1970: 26) there is no single method which solves the problem of validity. Therefore, I employed a number of differing techniques designed to ensure validity of information. First, I relied upon informants who knew the respondent personally to cross check the data I received on personal background.

At Rocky Hill I had extensive informal conversations with an informant who described each officer's (17) personality and work experience. These detailed descriptions made me aware of what each officer was "like". In all cases, the information elicited during the interviews matched what the informant told me. I employed this same

procedure at Oswald for personal background information.

Validity of information concerning the officer's work experience and experiences (inmate fights or stabbings that were seen or prevented by the officer) were handled identically to those just explained. Informants were utilized to provide this researcher with information concerning each officer's work experience. I also used my own personal experience as an officer to determine if a situation (prevention or witnessing a fight) being described to me by an officer was plausible.

I believed my best check for the validity and reliability of information gathered in my interviews proved to be my personal experiences as a correctional officer. The fact that during my employment the other guards were not aware of my role as a researcher became crucial later. I consistently drew upon these experiences as a check upon the information gathered during the interview.

It should be noted that there are both drawbacks and assets to having become so familar with the world of the prison guard (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1969: 89-104; Dean and Whyte, 1969: 105-114). The biggest problem I faced was going native or losing objectivity (Miller, 1969: 87-89; Weinberg and Collins, 1972: 177-179; Douglas, 1972: 18-26). During my employment as one, I became extremely sympathetic to the officers' claims of being stereotyped and receiving little respect and consideration for the job they perform. Whether this sympathetic viewpoint affected my findings can only be determined by future research carried out by other sociologists.

The subjects' ages ranged from a low of 26 to a high of 62 years, with an average age of 43 years. Twenty-four officers were white and one was black. There were twenty-two males and three females interviewed. Twenty-one officers were married, three were divorced, and one was widowed. Of those married, the average family size was 4.1 (two adults and two children).

Educationally, twenty-three officers possessed a high school diploma, three of these 23 had associate degrees from a junior college. These associate degrees were awarded to one individual in general studies and two in criminal justice. One officer graduated from a university with a B.S. degree in corrections. Overall eight of the twenty-five officers had some college credits.

The officers' job histories revealed a total of 111 jobs between themselves, in which each subject had an average of 4.4 jobs before becoming an officer. Seventeen of the officers had a total of 150 years of military experience, with an average of 8.8 years per officer. The twenty-five officers had a total of 193.2 years of correctional experience, with an average of 7.73 years per officer.

The respondents were born and raised in towns and cities ranging from populations of 104 to one million. Fourteen were raised in towns with populations under 10,000. Eleven were born in towns and cities greater than 10,000. All officers presently reside in towns under 20,000.

From the data listed above, one can conclude that the predominant characteristics of these officers are as follows: white, married, around forty years old, in possession of a high school diploma, veteran correctional officers, having some military experience, and born and raised in a rural setting.

Keeping these characteristics in mind let us now analyze the findings obtained from the twenty-five interviews.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROCESSES INVOLVED IN BECOMING A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

This chapter will explain how and why individuals become correctional officers. In accomplishing this, the following topics will be discussed: 1) types of turning points which preceded entrance into the occupation; and, 2) effects of social relationships that were experienced by individuals leading to initial application for the job.

Children often state that when grown they would like to be a doctor, policeman, nurse, etc. However, seldom do children aspire to become correctional officers. Jacobs and Retsky (1977: 51) describe a study by Lou Harris in which only one percent of teenagers surveyed indicated that they had given any consideration to a career in corrections. The decision to become a correctional officer appears to occur later in life. From the data collected for this project, it can be seen that when these individuals applied for the job they were in their mid-thirties, and nearly all interviewees were already married when they applied for the job.

Persons appear to apply for the job when they have reached a turning point in their lives. Strauss (1969: 100) describes a turning point as:

> Points in development when an individual has to take stock, to re-evaluate, revise, resee, and rejudge. Although stocktaking goes on within the single individual, it is obviously both a socialized and a socialying process.

Lofland (1966: 50) describes a turning point as a "moment when old lines of action were complete, had failed, or had been or were about to be disrupted, and when they were faced with the opportunity or necessity for doing something different with their lives." He further adds:

> Turning points in general derived from having recently migrated, lost or quit a job, or graduated from, failed in, or quit an educational institution.
>
> The significance of these various kinds of turning points lies in their having produced an increased awareness of a desire to take some action on their problems, combined with a new opportunity to do so. Turning points were circumstances in which old obligations and lines of action had diminished, and new involvements had become desirable and possible (Lofland, 1966: 50-51).

The concept of turning points has been utilized in a similar fashion by Stan Cross (1973, 1977) in his fieldwork among police. The following discussion of types of turning points draws heavily from his research.

Types of Turning Points

By analyzing the biographical histories of the twenty-five officers, five types of turning points were discovered. What follows is a discussion of each type of turning point and examples of these cited by some of the officers.

Retirement from the military. The first turning point is retiring from the military and immediately going into corrections. This type of turning point occurred in five cases in which the individuals had served twenty or more years in either the Army or Marine Corps. When these individuals retired, they were between forty-two and fifty

years old. All had had correctional experience while in the military. Yet by being this old at retirement, other potential occupations which would allow the individuals to utilize their correctional experience (police, FBI, or federal level corrections) were blocked. Instead of sitting at home and drawing a monthly pension check, state corrections became a viable career in which prior education or training was not needed. As one individual pointed out:

> I was in the Marine Corps and worked at a brig on the East Coast and when I retired I knew corrections would be my second career.

For two other individuals the same thing occurred, except each had worked at the Army Disciplinary Barracks located near Rocky Hill. One was a sergeant who had nine years of experience and once had been in charge of a cell house. The other person had seven years of correctional experience in the military.

Prior military experience also was instrumental for another individual:

> When I was in the Army they shipped me out to Korea and before long I was in charge of a prisoner of war camp. After I retired, I signed on with _____ Department of Corrections. It only took me three years to make sergeant and now I'm a Captain.

These illustrations of the first type of turning point show that the end of a military career creates a turning point in the individual's life. However, having had previous experience in military corrections, coupled with the blocking off of similar occupations appear to have been the crucial variables in compelling the individuals to enter the

correctional field. Also, at the time of retirement these individuals had been stationed at military bases that were in close proximity to both Rocky Hill and Oswald State Penitentiaries.

Dissatisfactions with previous jobs. The next type of turning point concerns dissatisfactions with previous jobs. In some cases previous jobs did not provide enough hours for work or there were confrontations with past supervisors. This type of turning point was experienced by eleven persons. For one individual it was the odd hours and low pay that encouraged him to seek new lines of action:

> I have held down lots of jobs, but when I became a bartender I really liked it. I met lots of people and made good money. They (owners) cut back my hours and since I was just divorced I had to pay off some debts. So I became a night watchman. It was mentally lonely and the pay wasn't good ($2.00 per hour), so I went to the pen and got hired. Least ways I knew there would be a check every month.

This turning point, plus proximity to Rocky Hill (when he applied he lived only two blocks from the prison) led him into seeking state corrections as a new line of action.

For another individual, never getting vacation time was important in becoming an officer.

> I worked on a bread route and I really liked it because I had a chance to meet people but I quit because we never got a vacation.

This person had been born and raised in the same town where Rocky Hill was located. He knew correctional officers obtained vacation time and while reading a newspaper, saw an ad calling for persons to be correctional officers. The next day this individual went to Rocky Hill, took

the exam and was later hired.

Another individual experienced a critical incident with his former boss. This person had an argument with his supervisor over the way he managed his shift. His boss criticized and accused him of being a "rate buster."

> The only reason why they didn't like me was because the people I supervised liked me and we accomplished more on my shift than the other shifts.

After the argument, this interviewee quit his job. He tried several other jobs but quit them as well and went on unemployment. He had friends who worked at Rocky Hill and they convinced him to work there also. He told his father about applying for a job at Rocky Hill and his father replied that he would be very proud to have a son who was a correctional officer.

For this individual, the road to becoming an officer first started with quitting several jobs and going on unemployment. Then friends and relatives, plus proximity to Rocky Hill provided the necessary encouragement to apply for the guard job. The situational factors concerning dissatisfactions with previous jobs were not enough to lead an individual to apply for the job. Rather, they could have chosen alternate paths of employment. Instead, dissatisfactions with previous jobs in conjunction with social relationships with relatives and friends who were officers, and proximity to the prisons were conducive factors which led them to become correctional officers.

Being laid off. The third turning point centers on three individuals who were forced out of their previous occupations. This occurred by either being laid off or by their own business folding. One interviewee had worked in a door factory for twenty years. The company laid him off and a short time later it went bankrupt. This individual was fifty years old when the lay-off occurred. Here we can see an obvious example of a turning point. Being fifty years old blocks other career opportunities. Even though he was getting old "total retirement" was impossible because of financial reasons.

> I live only five minutes from the prison and my friends (who worked at Rocky Hill) told me the place would hire me.

Again we see how a turning point (being laid off), social relationships, and close proximity to the prison resulted in this individual's applying to become a correctional officer.

In another case, an individual had a long "career" of being laid off from jobs.

> When I graduated from high school I worked as a welder and I liked it because it was a trade. They laid me off. So I joined the Navy and when I got out I did construction (built basements) until I was laid off. I went back to the welding shop and worked as an assistant pressman until I was laid off.

This interviewee was 34 at the time he applied for the job at Rocky Hill. The guard job was perceived as providing a sense of security where lay-offs were not anticipated. At age 34, having an interrupted work record for many years blocked entry into other higher paying jobs. The factors of being laid off, age, proximity of Rocky Hill and the security

of year round work provided the impetus that led this individual into correctional work.

The other individual also had an on and off work record (military service, carpentry, trade school, and hospital work) which ended when he hurt his back while working at an automobile plant. While recuperating form the injury, his uncle, an officer at Oswald, convinced him to fill out an application to work there in 1970. He filled out an application and was soon called to work. In five years this individual worked his way up the prison hierarchy by becoming a zone lieutenant. By 1975 the lieutenant accumulated enough capital to start his own business, a service station. He then quit the penitentiary in 1975 with the opening of his own business. He had no intentions of going back to the prison "now that he was his own boss." Things did not work out so well financially as he had anticipated. The service station folded in 1977. Here is another clear indication of a turning point. In fact, his decision in 1977 to go back to the prison was similar to that of when he first applied in 1970.

> I didn't have any other place to go for work and I've got a wife and four kids to feed. Besides I was a good officer, made lieutenant in five years. So I reapplied at Oswald, I knew they would take me back. Since I came back it took me only a year to be lieutenant anyways.

For this individual, lay-off, his uncle's influence, and proximity to Oswald initiated him to seek prison work as a new line of action.

Although these interviewees had experienced lay-offs, these by themselves were not enough to lead them into applying for correctional

work. It took the simultaneous effects of the turning point, age, proximity, and social relationships (friends who were officers and an uncle, also an officer) to lead the individual into applying to become a correctional officer.

Being employed in state corrections as a stop gap measure. In the fourth turning point, three individuals became correctional officers as a stepping stone into a more desired field of work. For example, one person became an officer at Rocky Hill with the intention of gaining three years of correctional experience to become an officer on the federal level. At the federal level an individual has to have three years of correctional experience or enough college credits to cancel out the work experience. The pay and working benefits are superior to those at the state level. Once this person obtained the required three years of work experience on the state level, he would apply for the federal level immediately. This person was just "biding his time" by working in the prison.

In this case, federal level corrections was a goal and Rocky Hill provided the required work experience towards this goal. This individual was born and raised in the same town where Rocky Hill is located. Although proximity was important, the crucial variable in this case was the individual's father, who was a counselor at the federal penitentiary. Not only was his father a counselor, but he was also one of the few persons who sit on a panel that interviews new applicants. Proximity

to Rocky Hill, and his father's influence provided the necessary impetus that led this individual into making corrections a career.

For another individual, his previous job of being a painter was seasonal and he needed year round employment to support his wife and child. This person was also born and raised near Oswald and he knew the prison involved year round work. He applied at Oswald with the intention of being an officer for a few years to obtain experience in dealing with inmates and then take the necessary tests to become a counselor. Therefore, becoming an officer was a step toward becoming a counselor.

In summary, the three interviewees became officers for the purposes of using that experience to open up doors leading to more lucrative positions in corrections.

Turning points experienced by female officers. The turning points, previously discussed, all concerned male officers only. The fifth point to be discussed will address three female officers who were interviewed. The female officers could not have been included in the other categories. They belong in a separate category because the turning points experienced differed significantly from that of the males. Female officers reached turning points due to the actions of husbands or children. This was not the case for male officers.

In one situation, the woman's husband retired from working for the state and she needed a steady job.

> I worked for a drug store for twelve years until they (the state) tore it down because of highway construction. I filled an application out because of necessity. My husband retired and we could use the extra money because working at the prison was year round work.

When applying for the job at the prison, this individual was fifty years old. Her age blocked other opportunities and she needed steady work to support herself and husband. She also lived close to, and knew that the prison would hire her in spite of her age. Old lines involving her husband were halted and new lines were sought that provided security. Even though her husband retired, this was not in itself the only factor that led her to seek out corrections as a career. Taken together, her husband's retirement convinced this woman that correctional work would provide financial security.

The second female interviewee applied for correctional work to supplement her husband's income. Her husband was a painter, which was seasonal work and although she had worked all her life, previous jobs (factory work and being a waitress) did not provide enough supplemental income. At age 48 she applied and was hired at the woman's prison located near Rocky Hill. Although her children were grown and married, they thought it was great that their mother would be working at the prison.

In this situation, the individual became an officer to help support herself and husband. The need for financial security was crucial but not enough by itself for the individual to seek employment in

corrections. She was 48 when she applied, and other avenues of employment were blocked. She too lived near the prison and knew that being an officer was steady work. Even her children were happy that she would be working for the state. These four factors of increasing age, proximity to the prison, the need for financial security, and approval of her husband and children taken together led her to apply and become a state correctional officer.

The following is an account by the last female officer interviewed, revealing an interesting story.

> After we married I worked for a few years, but when I gave birth to my first child I quit working and became a housewife. I wasn't allowed to work and my husband wanted me to stay home and take care of the kids. Well after my youngest child went off to college, I did not want to stay home all day. I wanted to go to work. At this time I was forty-five and I did not know who would hire me. I did not want to sell clothes, there was no fulfillment in that. So my husband told me to take the civil service exam and see what happens. Well I did, and Rocky Hill contacted me and told me when to report for work."

This individual experienced a traumatic turning point where all the children had "left the nest." Simply remaining at home with no one to take care of anymore was undesirable. There was no longer any fulfillment in the home, old lines were halted and new avenues of action were sought. Any kind of work such as selling clothes was perceived as unfulfilling and therefore undesirable. She wanted to do something interesting, so her husband encouraged her to take the civil service exam and wait for the results. When called by Rocky Hill, she was hesitant to work in a prison. Her husband then encouraged her to see

what the job entailed.

Like the other females interviewed experiencing a turning point was not enough to lead this individual into seeking corrections as a career. Instead it took a combination of factors. Her age at the time of the turning point was forty-four, which also was a barrier to other opportunities. She wanted interesting work and was encouraged by her husband to take the civil service exam. Although she was called to work by the prison, it took the encouragement of her husband to go to Rocky Hill and see what the job involved. From the following discussion we can see that a turning point (children leaving home), increasing age, an important social relationship (her husband), and proximity led this individual into a career in corrections.

The reasons for women becoming correctional officers differs sharply from that of males. The decision to make a career in corrections was not made until an important event occurred in the home. It took a husband that retired, one involved in seasonal work, and for the children to leave home that made these women take stock and seek to revise old lines of action. There were twenty males interviewed, and not one became an officer because his wife had retired or his children had left home.

The first chapter of this project examined the literature and indicated that little has been written about correctional officers. What was written seemed to be unsympathetic and alluded to only male officers. Literature concerning only female officers is virtually

non-existant. Female officers are a group for which further research is needed. Investigation could probe into the following areas: 1) the "hows and whys" of females becoming officers; 2) the effects being a female officer has on the family; and, 3) how female officers deal with the popular imagery describing officers as being dumb or sadistic. By probing into these and other areas, we might be able to gain a better understanding of what it is like to be a correctional officer.

In this chapter it was shown that there is a process working that led these individuals into correctional work. It was also pointed out that people do not aspire to become prison guards. In fact, the interviewees chose to become officers later in life, around the age of thirty-four or thirty-five. The process started with a situation (turning point) where old lines of action were halted. Once halted, there was a stock-taking and an effort to revise old lines into new lines of action. Yet simply experiencing a turning point was not enough to lead a person into becoming an officer. It involved a combination of factors. Another factor was age, on the average the respondents were thirty-five when they applied. Being this old blocked other employment opportunities. Next, all these individuals were in close proximity to the prisons, and knew that the institutions were a steady source of work. Last, the majority of these people had significant social relationships with friends and relatives (many of whom worked at the prisons) that encouraged them to become officers. It took these four factors

in conjunction to lead the interviewees into the intial application for the job.

Now that we understand the process culminating in application for the job, let us proceed to examine how the new recruit is socialized into the job of correctional officer.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIALIZATION

This chapter will address the formal and informal learning processes which led to the adoption of the guard role.

Before anyone can become a correctional officer certain objective requirements must be met. Applicants at both Rocky Hill and Oswald must satisfy four basic requirements: 1) they must be twenty-one; 2) they must have a high school diploma or equivalent; 3) they never have been convicted of a felony; and, 4) they must pass a civil service exam. However, there are some important differences between the hiring and formal training procedures of the two respective institutions. Let us now proceed to examine these differences.

If the individual passes the exam, Rocky Hill will notify the applicant when to report to the prison for an interview with the major and Deputy Director of Operations (security). These officials ask each applicant questions regarding their background in an effort to ascertain what the person is like. Although the interview is a potential screening device rarely do these officials exclude an individual from consideration as an officer. The high turnover rate demands that the majority of applicants be hired (Brodsky, 1977: 255-256; Jacobs and Retsky, 1977: 52-53).

If the individual passes the interview, Rocky Hill notifies the

applicant to report for orientation. Orientation begins the formal training of the new correctional officer. The training is formal in that it is conducted under the auspices of an institutional training officer.

Formal Training at Rocky Hill

On the first day of orientation all new recruits receive a physical examination. The exam tests dexterity and overall body condition. Even if a person has a bad back, knees, eyes, and/or is overweight, he can still become a correctional officer. With the exception of severe body deformities anyone can qualify for correctional work. In fact, this physical requirement is the same at Oswald in that to be an officer one has to satisfy the basic requirements and as an informant pointed out to me "be a warm body to fill a uniform for awhile."

Next, the recruits proceed to a training session where a training officer informs the class about rules, regulations, pay, leave time, issuance and care of uniforms, etc. The recruits are also warned of the pitfalls of guard work. That is, they are instructed not to sympathize with the inmates, smuggle contraband in or out, and to maintain their poise at all times. Lastly, all new recruits receive weapons training and then fire their qualifying rounds. To be an officer one has to score a certain number of points in target practice. This is

necessary because tower duty may require an individual to shoot an inmate trying to escape or trying to attack an officer. Then, at the end of the day, each officer is assigned to a shift and instructed that the following day begins on-the-job training.

On-the-job training is a nine day program that familiarizes new recruits with other officers, the prison hierarchy, and the location of various buildings within the prison.[1] They obtain a small dose of what the job is like. On the seventh or eighth day the recruits receive their orders assigning them to a shift. Depending on their days off, most individuals begin work in two days.

The most important differences in requirements are that applicants at Oswald are interviewed by a staff psychologist and not by a Major or Deputy Director. In spite of this difference the purpose of the interview remains the same. Not only does it allow a senior staff member to meet all new recruits, it also serves as a screening device. However, like the Rocky Hill applicants those at Oswald are rarely denied a job due to their interview performance because of the high turnover rate among officers. Also, new recruits at Oswald attend a week long training session encompassing both on-the-job and classroom instruction. The following is a personal account of the formal training

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[1]On-the-job training is part of orientation, but informal learning occurs as well. This is because the recruits are not directly supervised by a training officer, but rather by other officers. I realize there can be overlap and these examples will be pointed out but orientation will be referred to as formal training (learning).

I underwent at Oswald in 1977.

Formal Training at Oswald

The formal training session at Oswald consisted of four days of classroom instruction and one day of field experience. This formal training session can be divided into three elements describing classroom learning.

The first element of classroom training directed its attention to the teaching of practical skills. The training officer lectured on such topics as riot control procedures, disciplinary report writing, shakedown tactics, self defense, shackling of inmates, legal rights of officers, and weapons maintenance. Various practical skills were also taught during field experience such as operating locks and keys, weapons qualifications and counting methods. In addition, the class learned what to do in gun towers, the hospital, administrative segregation, cellhouses, and the dining hall.

Even though classroom instruction covers many important topics, it does not provide instruction on how to deal with the inmates. This is the second element of training which is learned during on-the-job training and is learned informally. For example, on the second day of orientation the training officer brought the class to the dining hall to serve food during lunch to the inmates. It so happened that this was sausage and egg day. Eggs are rarely served and regarded as a delicacy by the inmates. As a result almost every inmate would come to

receive his share. This, however, was not pointed out to the class. The training class had the responsibility of serving one egg and one piece of sausage to over fifteen hundred inmates. Half the inmates were satisfied with the limit of one item per man, while the rest wanted extra servings. It was a hectic lunch time and new recruits learned to say the standard officer terms of "no" and "keep moving" in five minutes. This is a clear example of informal learning occurring during formal training. Effective interaction with the inmates cannot be taught, it has to be learned from experiences such as this.

For both prisons, an additional purpose served by on-the-job training is the weeding out of recruits who are afraid and/or cannot cope with the institutional environment. The dining hall situation was frightening because of the smell, noise, profanity and heat in the dining hall. The presence of so many black inmates caused many uneasy feelings for the white recruits. In spite of these conditions not one trainee in our class quit. For other recruits similar frightening experiences can be conducive to resignation from guard work. For example, an informant pointed out to me that one new recruit was assigned yard duty his first day of on-the-job training. It turned out that the trainee was the only white person in the yard. Once the inmates were called in he went straight to the Captain's office and turned in his uniform and left. It is in these situations during orientation where new recruits learn about the prison environment and if they find

it too frightening or unappealing, they drop out of training.

The third element of the training session utilized atrocity stories to highlight the negative attributes of the inmates. There were three types of atrocity stories told by the training officer during classroom instruction to sensitize new recruits as to what kinds of inmates were housed in the prison. The stories involved only inmates and focused upon either inmate activities or racial distinctions. By focusing upon only inmate behavior, the stories also served to heighten officer solidarity. That is, stories were told to point out that "we", the guards have got to stick together against "them", the inmates. According to Dingwall (1977: 394) these stories are functional:

> Atrocity stories are directed towards novices as a depiction of the performance requirements of the work and obstacles which lie in their path. They also perform a peculiarly dramatic part of the oral culture of the occupation.

The first type of atrocity stories center on the blood and guts aspect of prison work. The class was told a story about how one inmate tried to procure sexual favors from his cellmate. Despite his cellmate's pleas, the aggressor tortured him by sticking a pencil under his fingernails. Still refusing to give in, or even cry out, the attacker poked both his eyes out with the pencil. The tortured inmate still refused to submit. In desperation, the aggressor placed the pencil in his victim's nose ramming it into his brain and killing him. Once dead the torturer proceeded to sodomize the dead body.

The training officer recounted another story in which during

supper, one inmate split another's head open to the jaw with an axe. Afterwords, the inmate politely walked over to an officer and surrendered his weapon.

Atrocity stories serve several important functions. One is to make new recruits aware that inmates are dangerous and need to be dealt with with caution. More importantly, blood and guts stories are intended to point out the inhumanity of the inmates towards each other. That is the fact that inmates have been known to kill each other in dramatic and cold-blooded fashion serves as a rationale for their need to be imprisoned. In sum with this type of story:

> employees are trained to view inmates as dangerous and conniving men from whom society must be protected even at risk of life (Etzioni, 1966: 172-173).

The second type of atrocity story focused on the "humorous" activities of the inmates. Even stories with a potentially violent plot were regarded as humorous by the training officer and the class. For example, the class was told about an inmate who tried to stab another inmate in the kidneys with a soup spoon. The training officer had the class laughing when it was further pointed out the spoon bent in half doing no damage to the intended victim. The most frequent type of "humorous" atrocity story concentrated upon inmate homosexuality. One story was recounted where a queen (male homosexual prostitute) had received five hemorrhoid operations in the last two years. Adding to the humor it was indicated that a certain captain shaved the same queen's

head, making "her" bald and therefore unattractive to other inmates.

Violence in humorous atrocity stories plays only a minor part. Instead, new recruits are informed about the inmates' odd sexual proclivities to emphasize the differences between the officers and inmates. That is, to the officer homosexuality is a sign of the inmate's moral degeneracy (Jacobs and Retsky, 1977: 63). Again these stories are designed to impress the recruits with the idea that inmates are dangerous, of lower moral fiber, and need to be kept off the streets.

Last are racial slurs heard by the class during on-the-job and classroom training. In a cellhouse two other recruits and I were introduced by a sergeant to two black inmates he referred to as Sambo and Cheetah. Then in class recruits were told (there were no black recruits) that "if you kill a nigger attacking an officer from a gun tower you will be awarded a raise from the warden." The training officer also indicated that as officers "most of your trouble will come from niggers," or that "niggers like to rape young white inmates."

From these examples it can be seen that racist statements were common during both formal and informal conversations with officers. These openly racist statements served to degrade black inmates, demonstrate their aggressiveness towards white inmates, and reveal their defiant attitudes towards prison rules. This finding contradicts Jacobs' and Retsky's (1977: 63) research on Stateville officers who did not openly indicate racist attitudes. My findings on open racism are

comparable to Stark's (1972: 98-106) research on racism among polite officers and Carroll's (1974: 123-130) research on prejudice among correctional officers.

According to Carroll (1974: 126) the reasons for prejudicial behavior on the part of white officers stem from their membership in working class American society. That is, officers share many of the traditional stereotypes of blacks and see their status threatened by black militancy and civil rights legislation. Moreover, the officers at Oswald work in a reform-oriented institution where many of their past powers and much of their status has been eroded because of court rulings. This loss of power and prestige is interpreted by the officers in racial terms (Carroll, 1974: 127). In sum black militancy (muslims), loss of prestige and status, and the increasing dominance of a black inmate majority are the factors conducive to racial prejudice. Not only do white officers see black inmates as aggressive and defiant of prison rules, but they also see black inmates as militant and dangerous people who are conspiring to further undermine the power and status of correctional officers.

Although the majority of officers referred to black inmates as niggers, they did not do so in the presence of black inmates. Why do the guards try to hide their feelings from the black inmates? According to Goffman:

> Backstage derogation of the audience serves to maintain the morale of the team. And when the audience is present, considerate

> treatment of them is necessary, not for their sake, or for their sake merely, but so that continuance of peaceful and orderly interaction can be assured (1959: 175).

Common sense dictates that officers keep their prejudices to themselves in the presence of black inmates. If the officers remained openly racist not only would the blacks retaliate, but institutional order could not be preserved as exemplified by Attica.

Before analyzing informal learning, let us first examine the notion of reality shock experienced by most new recruits during their first few days on the job (after orientation).

Reality Shock

During the interviews the following question was asked: Was your first day on the job any different than you had expected? The notion of reality shock is implied in this question. The concept of reality shock deals with differences between formal training and actual work experience. There are different types of reality shock, for example, Cross (1972: 138) asserts that reality shock is due to a failure in anticipatory training. Reality shock can also come about because of a failure in the formal training program (Hughes, 1952). This does not mean the training officer deliberately misled or idealized prison work, rather he somewhat distorted the reality surrounding the nature of guard work. The distortion of reality occurred as a result of discussing many crucial topics inadequately (how inmates are disciplined) or not at all (how to interact with inmates). The interview data revealed two

types of reality shock. In the first type, reality shock was experienced by twelve individuals who perceived the prisons as being tolerant of inmate misbehavior. These individuals started work with expectations of a tightly-run, well ordered institution. The training sessions solidified these feelings by informing the new recruits that the prisons run like clockwork. Recruits were told that the inmates have a routine to follow and must be in a certain location at a specified time or be disciplined. Yet the recruits were not advised that it is nearly impossible to keep tabs on the entire inmate population. Once on the job, these twelve individuals were shocked because of the lack of inmate and institutional order. For example, the statement given by the following officer clearly summarizes this type of reality shock.

> I thought it (the prison) would be more disciplined, you know more formal where the officers would get some respect.

The officers' expectations of a tightly-run institution were shattered when they soon realized that prisoners were not on a time table and moved freely within the walls. At the same time these officers realized the inmates were not a passive obedient population, but rather a violent and verbally abusive one. Actual work experience proved to be a rude awakening for these twelve individuals.

The second type of reality shock focused on the presence of inmate homosexuality and was experienced by one individual. A female

matron was not worried about order or discipline, however, overt lesbianism shocked her.

I was shocked to find girls dressing like men.

This individual was not that gullible to think that homosexuality did not exist, but instead she had never before come in contact with lesbianism. Thus, the actual work experience proved to be a rude awakening for this individual when she observed open homosexuality.

Even though reality shock had occurred, these individuals had to learn to cope with it by rationalizing both verbal abuse and disrespect from the inmates as a part of the job. Last of all, quitting because of these shocks would deny them the financial security they sought from prison work in the first place.

The twelve people who answered no to the reality shock question pointed out they were well aware of what they were getting into. These individuals either had previous correctional experience in the military or had friends and relatives connected with the prison in some capacity. These officers had "seen it all before" or "heard about it all before" and were not shocked by institutional activities.

Informal Socialization

As noted earlier, formal training in most cases does not prepare individuals for prison work (Turnbull, 1978: 54; Roucek, 1935: 147). This is indicated by the thirteen officers who experienced some reality shock after orientation. By itself formal training is only one aspect

of the socialization process. A second aspect is the informal socialization process experienced by new recruits. In order to examine this, the following areas will be covered: 1) informal socialization by other officers; and, 2) testing of new recruits by officers and inmates.

Informal socialization by other officers. One of the most important things rookies begin to learn during their first few weeks on the job is the prison language. Although the language is spoken by both officers and inmates, in most cases it is learned informally through interaction with other officers.[2] By informal learning we mean learning occurring after the formal orientation period or learning without the auspices of an institutional training officer. The argot system used in prison is extensive, (see Clemmer, 1958: 330-336) but for our purposes the language can be broken down into two types.

The first type reflects officer work assignments. For instance a rookie may be told that today he is "on the bench." "On the bench" refers to utility duty, more commonly named "go for work." Here the rookie receives numerous assignments throughout his/her shift. He/she may be told to "work the buttons in the roundgate." This means the

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[2]Even though formal training is superficial, it does begin to sensitize new recruits to the argot system. There is in this instance some overlap, because informal learning occurs frequently and not just at the end of formal training.

officer will go to the gate adjacent the control center and operate the buttons opening and closing two gates that give access to the cellhouses. While "on the bench", a captain may tell a new officer to work "mainline." "Mainline" refers to the three daily inmate meals, so here the new officer is instructed to work in the dining hall during lunch or supper. By working "mainline," an officer supervises inmate activity making sure fights or scuffles do not start. If a fight occurs, the officer(s) must break it up immediately because the presence of so many inmates makes the dining hall the most volatile spot in prison. There are many other terms reflecting officer work assignments, however, most new officers do not know where these "places" are, and rely on veteran officers for help. The veteran officers are very helpful because they too had experienced the same unfamiliarity. After a few weeks on the job, the rookie knows where "things" are located and soon begins to use the same terminology in his conversations with other officers.

The second type of prison argot refers to the inmates. A rookie will probably hear officers referring to inmates as "freaks" and "punks." The former refers to all black inmates while the latter refers to young homosexually inclined inmates. By conversing with veteran officers, the recruit learns which inmates are "daddies" (inmates who control punks) or "politicians" (inmates with pull on the outside and inside). He also learns how to identify "skaters." These are inmates either out of

bounds or hustling. Formal training familiarizes new recruits with some prison argot referring to inmates as "queens" and "punks." However, the bulk of terminology referring to inmates (daddies, politicians and skaters) is learned through informal conversations with other officers.

There is, of course, much more to the prison argot system than alluded to here. Nevertheless, the point remains clear, formal training does not familiarize new recruits with prison argot describing work assignments. Instead new recruits learn this type of terminology with increased time on the job and through informal conversations with veterans.

Dealing with fellow officers. Within prison there are certain rules of behavior a new officer learns for dealing with both officers and inmates. It would seem obvious to those people who are not "prison-wise" that new officers should learn to trust their fellow officers. This is not always the case. Earlier we saw how basic training socialized new recruits into understanding how the prison operates. Yet, orientation omits one very important topic: the identification of officers who can or cannot be trusted. Within a prison not only are the inmates potentially dangerous, so are the fellow officers. For example, one officer had to learn which officers could be depended upon in a fight.

> I had to learn which officers to trust because not all of them will back you up in a scrape.

In some situations such as fights or stabbings between inmates an officer may look the other way or refuse to get involved. Only through increased time on the job, experience in breaking up disturbances, and conversations with other officers can rookies learn which of their peers can be depended upon in a crisis situation.

Another topic neglected by orientation involves fellow officers who "snitch each other off." That is, one officer will inform a supervisor about another officer's alleged "illegal activity." An officer might "get snitched off" because he was seen sitting down on the job or failing to "properly" finish a work assignment. Whatever the case may be, "snitching off" fellow officers is an attempt to gain "brownie points" with a supervisor in exchange for favoritism when promotions or merit raises are to be awarded (Jacobs and Retsky, 1977: 53). One officer feared her co-workers more than the inmates.

> The only danger from this job is from your co-workers. There is a lot of ass-kissing going on around here.

My own personal experience with snitching at Oswald can illustrate how it operates. During my first week of work, I was "on the bench" and told to work "mainline." Before the inmates arrived at the dining hall, officer B., who realized I was new, came over and introduced himself. Within minutes he asked "if I could loan him some pot until payday." He said he could buy his own pot once payday rolled around. Even though I

had no idea what he was up to, I stated that "smoking pot was not my game." For several days he kept asking me "to get him some pot." I asked officer L., who I regarded as straight, why was officer B., so persistent in trying to obtain pot from me.[3] Officer L. informed me that officer B. was one of the biggest guard snitches in prison.

The very nature of guard work with its low pay, few promotions, and high turnover rate inspires some officers to inform on others to gain favoritism from supervisors (Jacobs and Retsky, 1977: 54). According to one high ranking official in each prison, snitching is not as bad as it used to be. These two officials pointed out that when they became correctional officers (in 1953 and 1960 respectively) the yearly income for an officer was between $3,000 and $4,000. Not only were the wages poor, but promotions were based almost entirely on the spoils system. In sum if an officer was not a member in the dominant clique or did not have friends in the prison administration, opportunities for promotions would be limited. In conjunction, these factors led to a system where informing and backbiting were common. However, these officials indicated that the factors leading to a decline in snitching are the advent of objective-requirements for the job, increased wages

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[3] I regarded Officer L. as straight because earlier in the week I could not find a work assignment and I asked him for help. Not only did he give me the directions to locate the job, he informed me of my responsibilities involving that job. In addition, a month later, I found out from other officers that officer B. was in fact a snitch.

(the average rookie earns around $7,000 a year at both these prisons), and the hiring of prison administrators based on merit.

Even though their reason of poor wages is not good because inflation has doubled in twenty years and today's officer is actually making less money, I do believe snitching is not as prevalent as it once was due to stricter objective hiring requirements. The point remains clear that orientation does not provide information to new recruits about snitching. The reason for this is that if the applicants knew some officers snitched on each other or "looked the other way" they probably would quit the job. They would quit because if they knew beforehand that some officers could not be depended upon in potentially dangerous situations, the job would be perceived as too risky. Only through increased time on the job and interaction with other officers will the rookie be able to identify which co-workers can or cannot be depended upon.

Another item left out of the training session centers around the clique activity of guards. This type of activity is prevalent at both institutions, but the following is a description of the dominant clique at Oswald known as "X squad." This clique is a formal unit consisting of twenty-five to thirty white male officers, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. Whenever there is a major disturbance within the prison, this group is specifically called in to restore order. Not anyone can

be a member of the "X squad", it is a complex process too lengthy for our purposes. Suffice it to say, however, that most of the individuals became members because they either had influential friends on the squad or knew officials high in the prison administration. To be an "X squad" member relieves officers of such undesirable jobs as tower and utility duty. Nonmembers have labelled some members as "one of the warden's boys" or "one of the captain's boys." Being a "warden's boy" opens up new possibilities for advancement or for merit raises. Promotions and merit raises are difficult to obtain, yet "X-squaders" are shown favoritism when these awards are distributed. For example, one X-squader" made lieutenant in less than two years, whereas many nonmembers have been officers for seven or eight years, never receiving a raise or promotion. There could be other factors involved such as a lack of skill or a poor work record on the part of some nonmembers that were conducive to few promotions or raises. It is possible, however, for nonmembers to rise up through the ranks without knowing people high in the prison administration. Nevertheless, membership in a clique such as this does help to open up many doors otherwise hard to open for nonmembers (Becker, 1973: 103-104). Formal training does not inform new officers regarding clique activity and the promotion of "favorite sons." Only through informal channels and time on the job will new recruits begin to see for themselves how the rewards of raises and promotions are obtained.

Dealing with the inmates. Turning from guard/guard behavior, we

must also look at guard/inmate behavior. The interpersonal relations between officers and inmates can be characterized by lack of trust. Formal training instructs new officers not to sympathize or do favors such as bringing in or out letters for the prisoners (Jacobs and Retsky, 1977: 57). In emphasizing this point, training officers tell stories about new officers who brought in drugs or guns for inmates. Smuggling contraband into prison is a felony and if a guard is caught he/she could go to prison. In dealing with the inmates all the interviewees stressed patience and distrust as the most desirable traits needed to be an officer. These characteristics, of course, cannot be taught. Only through observing other officers and experience can the rookie learn to be patient and cautious in his/her dealings with the inmates.

Distrust and caution are terms that have been used to describe the guard's attitude towards inmates. Jacobs and Retsky (1977: 61-62) point out that the guards' world is also pervaded by fear and uncertainity. Within maximum security prisons officers carry no weapons because they could be overpowered by the inmates and have the weapons turned against them. However, most inmates are armed or have access to a vast array of weapons such as shanks, acid, glass, brass knuckles, and pipes. During the interviews I asked each officer about fear and danger from the job. Twnety-one or 85% of the individuals felt the job could be dangerous. Physical abuse of the officers is not a daily occurance,

but there is always a chance it might occur. Prison is a violent world where fear is ever present. Even though formal training sensitizes new officers to the fact that working in a prison can be a potentially dangerous job, rookies do not understand the full implications of this information until they begin the job.

Testing

During the first few months on the job a new officer is "tested" by inmates and officers alike. Inmates will try to unnerve rookies by breaking institutional rules on purpose to see how the new officer will react. For example, an informant pointed out to me that one small statured new officer was working in the dining hall and as he was walking down an aisle a large muscular inmate jumped in front of the officer. The new officer laughed and continued on his way. This officer was tested in front of many inmates, but refused to act startled in any way. If he would have jumped back, the inmates would have taken this as a sign of fear.[4] In some cases inmates test new officers by asking them to bring in drugs. If the officer does the inmates may blackmail the officer into bringing in other illegal items. In yet, other cases, inmates test new officers by trying their patience. That is, inmates will bombard a new officer with questions or make fun of

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[4]If the inmates realize a new officer is afraid, the word is soon spread through prison by the inmate grapevine. Once the word has been spread on individual officers, the inmates model their behavior accordingly.

his/her ancestry. This type of testing can best be illustrated by the earlier example of serving food to the inmates. Threats accompanied many of the requests for more food but to have given in to their demands would have been interpreted by the inmates as a sign of weakness and fear. If the new officer is easily upset by these activities, the inmates know how to further annoy that officer. This was pointed out by one interviewee.

> All these guys do is sit in their houses (cells) and think twenty-four hours a day about ways to get under your skin. They got nothing else to do except play their games. Sooner or later they are going to get to you.

Some inmates may stage a fight in the yard or cellhouse in order to observe the reactions of a new officer. If the new officer calls for help and then breaks up the fight, the inmates know the officer is resourceful. Rushing in when two inmates are fighting can get an officer killed. Some officers are frightened when they see a fight and look the other way. From the inmates view, ignoring an inmate fight is a sign that the officer is weak or fearful. If fear is detected inmates will try to unnerve that officer. The inmates know that an officer who is afraid will not enforce the rules strictly. Thus inmates test officers to see how much they can get away with from individual officers. Some officers operate by the book, strictly but fairly enforcing the prison rules. The inmates have to know this because every officer is different. When a strict officer is around all the rules will be enforced, whereas a complaisant officer will be run over by the inmates.

Veteran officers do not test new officers as aggressively as the inmates do. The extent to which a new officer will be tested by veterans involves a subtle process dependent upon how the rookie handles himself in confrontations with the inmates. Thus, an officer has to prove himself competent and trustworthy in a similar fashion that juvenile gang members earn a "rep" (Spergel, 1964; Miller, 1972). Only after a rookie has handled an inmate fight, stabbing, or a verbal confrontation "properly" and after he has been observed by veterans, will the new recruit be seen as trustworthy. In the officers' world handling a fight "properly" means aiding another officer who is in trouble without hesitating. Veteran officers do not go after new recruits like the inmates do, but wait for a situation to occur where they can observe the actions of the new man. Recognition of individual officer's trustworthiness or untrustworthiness is achieved informally through the officer grapevine. In sum, it is the actions of the individual officer which defines his/her reputation.

Formal training teaches new officers to anticipate being tested by inmates. As indicated earlier, however, formal training gives no indication regarding testing by fellow officers. Only through informal socialization will new recruits learn the qualities such as backing up another officer in a confrontation with an inmate without hesitation that are respected by veteran officers.

Becoming a correctional officer depends on formal and informal learning as well as upon the actions of the individuals. If he is sadistic towards the inmates he can expect physical confrontations with the inmates. The days of the "old joint" are fading and to treat inmates cruelly can only result in both officers and inmates getting hurt. Every officer will handle a situation differently. Some will break up an inmate fight, others will call for help, some will let the inmates fight if he feels there is a good reason for the fight, or some will look the other way. To be considered a competent officer one must listen to and respect the advice of veteran officers. Above all, one must not hesitate to back up an officer who needs help. Informal and formal socialization can only point out the pitfalls in prison work. It is through actual work experience that a new officer can develop his/her own style (niche) and act accordingly.

In this chapter we saw that not everyone can become a correctional officer because certain requirements as age, education, and health need to be satisfied. Once satisfied, the applicant proceeds through an orientation period (formal training) where in class (Oswald) he/she begins to learn such practical skills as shackling of inmates and riot tactics. In addition, at both institutions through on-the-job training the new recruits begin to learn how to deal with the inmates. Then in order to emphasize the differences between guards and inmates, training officers employ atrocity stories. These stories have several functions,

one of which is to instill caution in the new recruits when dealing with inmates. The other, seeks to show how to maintain differences between the keeper and the kept. Atrocity stories, then legitimize the officers' position and widen the "we" versus "they" gap. Once the new recruit is assigned a permanent shift, informal socialization begins. Through interaction with other officers, new recruits begin to learn the prison argot and the guard subculture. That is, rookies soon learn that favoritism and membership in cliques are important when promotions and raises are awarded. At the same time he/she learns that not all officers can be depended upon in confrontations with inmates. We also have seen how inmates test new officers to see their reactions in specific situations. If fear is detected, the inmates will try to further unnerve the officer to see if he can be broken. Inmates also test new officers to see the degree of leniency or strictness they can expect from that individual. Veteran officers also test new recruits but in a more subtle manner. That is, veterans will not judge a new officer until they see how he handles a confrontation with the inmates. If the rookie passes, he is looked upon as competent. Incompetent officers are avoided by their colleagues because of their hesitancy when faced with dangerous situations. Last, we saw that there is no one all pervasive guard style. Instead, each individual officer develops his/her own style to meet the demands of the job. Formal training may sensitize new recruits to what guard work is about, but it is through informal socialization that rookies learn the ropes.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

In examining the guard role, this chapter will address the following topics: 1) development of an occupational self-image; 2) symbols which emphasize the officers' authority; and, 3) the ways in which guards cope with violence in prison. Once these topics have been discussed, then we will conclude with a summary of its major findings.

Development of an Occupational Self-Image.

According to Simpson and Simpson (1959) members of occupational groups often develop sets of beliefs, attitudes, and evaluations regarding their work which comprises an occupational self-image. By stressing certain highly valued aspects of the job such as skills or intensive preparatory training, an occupational self-image can provide workers with motivation and work satisfaction. Individuals in high-status occupations are aided in maintaining a favorable self-image by the social prestige of the occupation. For example, occupations such as doctors and lawyers are widely known to require skill, high income, and pleasant working conditions. Low status occupations, however, do not command favorable societal evaluations. In fact, in most cases the public evaluates many jobs as unappealing or distasteful because of low salaries, odd working hours, and unpleasant working conditions.

If, according to Jacobs and Retsky (1977) and Zimbardo (1971) being a correctional officer is a low-status occupation, how then do officers maintain a favorable self-image. To begin with, twenty-one or 85% of the officers interviewed pointed out that they are professionals. They see themselves as professionals because they believed they had learned certain skills and techniques in a training program essential to become an officer. The following quote from an officer sums up this idea of professionalism.

> I am a professional because not everybody can walk in off the street and do this job. It takes training to learn how to make the proper decisions when working in here.

From this quote, it can be seen that correctional officers believe that not everyone has the skill and expertise to deal with the inmates. Rather, it takes a "professional", someone who has been trained to work with the inmates.

Besides thinking of themselves as professionals, these twenty-one officers stressed they are in the "people business." That is, even though these officers regard the inmates as potentially dangerous, they still have to provide such humanistic services as listening to and counseling inmates regarding their personal problems. Also, despite the pervasive aura of non-trust, the officers pointed out that by being a guard one has to take care of the inmates such as passing out mail and medicine as well as maintain a friendly relationship with them. Simpson and Simpson (1959: 392) made a similar conclusion in their research among psychiatric attendants who developed a favorable

occupational self-image by taking care of the patients and not by sweeping floors. In sum, we find that correctional officers are similar to psychiatric attendants in that they develop a positive occupational self-image built around a professional-client relationship that provides needed human services to the inmates.

By internalizing the professional role, these officers have neutralized the image held by the public that officers are dumb and cruel. Also, by espousing professionalism, a rationale has been developed that motivates these individuals to continue working as correctional officers as well as reducing the effects of their low status occupation.

In chapter three we saw that most people became officers for such extrinsic reasons as increasing age that blocked entrance into other career lines or for income stability. Once on the job such intrinsic elements as a sense of professionalism and counseling of inmates were conducive factors that lead officers to think of themselves as performing meaningful work. The extrinsic factors leading to initial application in conjunction with the intrinsic factors of taking care of the inmates produced a favorable occupational self-image for these officers.[1]

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[1]Even though these officers pointed out that they liked to counsel inmates it does not mean they necessarily like their job. Data was not collected on whether or not these people liked their job. This paragraph is speculative and I agree with Simpson and Simpson (1959) that further research needs to be conducted on the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that motivated these officers to remain on the job.

Symbols Which Represent the Officer's Authority

In this section the following types of symbols representing the officers authority are discussed: 1) physical or non-verbal symbols of authority; 2) verbal symbols; and, 3) territorial symbols that represent the officer's and prison administrations authority.

Before discussing these symbols of authority we must first understand what constitutes a symbol. According to Lindesmith and Strauss (1968: 33) symbols are the characteristic forms of human symbolic activity that have to do with language or are signs derived from it. Mead states (1965: 210) that linguistic symbols call out a response or cue for action in human behavior. He (1965: 211) further points out that our symbols are universal. That is, we always assume that the symbol we use is one which will call out in the other person the response provided the symbol exists in his experience as well as ours. However, when discussing symbols we must also remember that not all symbols are necessarily linguistic for such cultural items as flags, crosses, music, art forms, and uniforms evoke responses that may not be verbal.

The first type of physical symbol representing an officer's authority is his/her uniform. According to Roucek (1935: 147) and Jacobs and Retsky (1977: 62) authority is not a function of the officer's uniform. Instead the sole function of the uniform, in their view is to distinguish the officers from the inmates. These researchers are correct

when they assert the uniform functions to identify the officers, but they have missed a very important point. That is, an officer's uniform embodies the rules of the prison in much the same way a policeman's uniform (Banton, 1964: 168; Rubenstein, 1975: 70) symbolizes the laws of the state, and the soldier's uniform symbolizes the power of the state (Gerth and Mills, 1953: 284). The prison guard's uniform serves to legitimize his position with certain rights and privileges such as power to enforce prison rules and freedom to move within the prison. Thus, if the officer's did not have a uniform then their position, power, and authority would have to be negotiated everytime they had an encounter with the inmates. The officer's uniform is a visible symbol to the inmates that their behavior is continually being scrutinized.

Another physical symbol of an officer's authority is his/her's notebook. During formal training all new recruits are instructed to carry a notebook in which to write down an inmate's name and number if he violates prison rules. Besides being used to write down rule infractions in, the officer's notebook can function as a potential threat of disciplinary action against an inmate. For example, if an officer is in a verbal confrontation that is getting out of control with an inmate, the officer can reach for his/her notebook and demand the inmates name and number. The inmates are usually afraid of being written up and when the officer pulls out his notebook and demands the inmates identity, he usually calms down and assures the officer that he meant no harm. In situations such as these the officer has a great deal

of discretion. The officer can either threaten the inmate by writing down his name and number and say "I will let it slide this time, but never again," or the officer can write the inmate up and report him for some type of rule and infraction. Threats of disciplinary action are an important means of social control, however, the officers must use their notebooks as a real means of disciplinary action more often than as a threat invoking device. The inmates are clever and they will soon discover that if an officer threatens more than he/she acts, then they will not respect that officer's authority. The notebook serves as a symbol of the officer's authority--it represents the potential for disciplinary action against the inmates.

The gun towers surrounding the institution are physical symbols of authority. If the inmates forget for one minute where they are, a glance at the towers serves as a harsh reminder. The towers are the ultimate symbol of power in prison because if an inmate tries to escape or attacks an officer within view of the towers, the tower guard will use armed violence to stop the problem. In sum, the towers and the men in them not only symbolize the stern hand of the community (Jacobs and Retsky, 1977: 59), but the power and potential for armed violence on the part of both the guards and the administration. There are other physical symbols such as keys and walkie-talkies that are used by the officers to symbolize their position of authority, and when the inmates observe these physical symbols their subordinate position within the

prison system is further reinforced and the guard's feeling of power and prestige is also reinforced.

In most cases humans react towards each other on the basis of verbal symbols. That is, language is a very important cue for human action. This section will address two ways in which verbal symbols represent an officer's authority within the prison.

In the course of everyday events it is possible that we may hear a teenage boy address his father as "Sir" or we might hear a person first address a policeman as "Officer" before asking him for directions. The same thing occurs in prison where inmates are required to address the uniformed man not by his/her first or last name but by the word "Officer." These examples of the ways in which some people address others whether required or not are called patterns of deference. These patterns of deference reflect the first type of verbal symbols of an officer's authority. According to Goffman:

> deference refers to that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient of this recipient, or of which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension, or agent (1956: 477).

In the prison situation, the officer is a symbol of authority and an extension and agent of the prison administration. The officers, regardless of rank are authority figures and the inmates must address the officers in a manner which reflects their authority. If the inmates addressed the guards by their first names, the prison atmosphere would

be too congenial for the prison rules to be strictly enforced. During formal training the new recruits are instructed to "make sure the inmates address you properly." Even though the officer's are deferred to does not mean they are respected because according to Goffman:

> Those who render deference to an individual may feel, of course, that they are doing this merely because he is an instance of a category, or a representative of something, and that they are giving him his due not because of what they think of him "personally" but in spite of it (1956: 478).

However, whether the inmate respects the officer or not, everytime he addresses a guard as "Officer," the inmate is reminded that the guard is in control of both the conversation and the prison. In other words, the inmates through their deference to the guard's authority are solidifying their position as subordinates within the prison system.

The second type of contextual symbol representing an officer's authority is his/her voice. For example, if an officer orders an inmate to "get back inside your cell" in a wavering voice the officer will probably be met with resistance from the inmates. The officer's self confidence could be questioned and his authority could be challenged. If an officer is unsure of himself, then he will not be able to be in control of explosive situations. Formal training emphasizes that officers will not be resisted if they order inmates in a non-hesitating and self-confident manner. This does not mean that the officer has to scream his/her orders at the inmates. Instead, the officer who acts in a deliberate manner and uses a forceful but restrained tone of voice

will be respected and will have his/her orders followed.

Verbal symbols such as being called "officer" by the inmates and using a forceful voice pattern are important means by which an officer maintains his authority over the inmates. Everytime the inmates address a uniformed man as "Officer," they are internalizing their inferior status within the prison.

Territorial symbols that represent an officer's authority. Thus far verbal and non-verbal symbols have been examined which symbolize an officer's authority in prison. However, there are other forms symbols can take that reflect the prison's and officer's authority. In this section we will examine how "territorial" symbols represent the power and authority to which inmates are subject.

When a person is sent to prison he/she is exiled from the community for a certain length of time. Upon entering prison the new inmate soon learns that besides being exiled from the community, he/she is also restricted in their movement within the prison. Inmates simply cannot go wherever they please. For example, inmates cannot walk up to the maingate, to do so would imply an escape attempt. Next, inmates cannot go to the visiting room or commisary unless first summoned by an officer. There are also rules which forbid inmates from being on another cellhouse tier without the permission of the "walk officer." In sum, there are many "territories" within the prison that are out-of-bounds to the inmates. Disciplinary procedures will be initiated if an inmate enters one of these proscribed areas without permission. These

teritorial symbols of authority represent imprisonment to the inmates. Not only are they degraded because their movement is restricted (Goffman, 1961) but the inmates know their's is an inferior status.

In conclusion, regardless of whether the symbols are verbal, non-verbal, or territorial the message conveyed to the inmates remains the same: authority and power within prison are the domain of the officers and prison administration. Last of all, these symbols evoke a response of compliance from the inmates that serves to illustrate their subordinate status.

Coping With The Institutional Environment

To the correctional officer inmate fights, stabbings, suicides, homosexual rapes, and murders are common events. In fact, most officers regard these violent inmate actions quite casually because they occur so frequently. Violence is a large part of the prison world and officers must remain emotionally detached. If an officer started crying or became overly concerned over an inmate stabbing or rape he would be regarded by both officers and inmates as weak and not capable of coping with institutional life. In a similar fashion doctors, according to Becker (1961: 421) look upon death and disease, not with horror and sense of tragedy which the layman finds appropriate but as problems in medical responsibility. According to Pine (1975: 134) funeral home directors also must remain emotionally detached when they go about their business of restoring the dead to a "lifelike" appearance.

Personnel in intensive care units see patients who die and suffer everyday and they too must "keep their emotions on ice" (Coombs and Goldman, 1973: 344). In order to manage their emotions when confronted with violence and death, correctional officers employ the following techniques: 1) bureaucratic management; 2) humor; and 3) rationalization of violence and death.[2]

Bureaucratic management. By this type of coping[3] we mean that during certain crises situations such as an inmate stabbing, the officer will emotionally detach himself from the situation by relying on his/her role as rule enforcer. That is, by enforcing the prison rules and breaking up the disturbance, the officer becomes enmeshed in his/her work role by not allowing personal feelings to take over. The proverbial maxim of "I have got a job to do" best illustrates this type of emotional detachment. For example, an officer pointed out that while he was working in the dining hall, one inmate cleaved another's head with a paper cutter. Blood and brains were scattered all over the floor. The officer indicated that he did not vomit or cry out but calmly asked

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[2]These modes of detachment are not reflections of officer personality types, rather officers use each one of these mechanisms as they define the situation.

[3]According to Coehlo et al. (1963) coping mechanisms have been defined as psychosocial mechanisms which help maintain self-management of feelings in stressful situations.

another officer to call for help, cordoned off the area, and picked up a part of the inmate's skull and put it back on his head. This officer followed the rules by calling for help, securing the crime scene, and gathering up the pieces of the man's head to be taken back to the hospital. He did not panic or hesitate, instead he became totally involved in his bureaucratic role of rule enforcer which kept him from becoming emotionally involved in the bloody situation. Thus the individual totally withdraws him/herself from the situation by escaping into their work role.

Humor. Coombs and Goldman (1973: 346) maintain that humor is one of the most common techniques used to manage crises situations. In their study (1973) of medical personnel who worked in an intensive care unit light-heartedness in the midst of such painful human drama was necessary to reduce the emotional strain created by the constant stream of critically ill patients. Humor is also used by correctional officers to deal with the stress caused by violence in prison. For example, one night while I was working an inmate was murdered. He was strangled to death with a sock by his cellmate. After the shift was over, I overheard a group of officers in the lobby talking about the murder that had just occurred. The officers were laughing because the one inmate was murdered with a sock. Then one officer pointed out that "oh well, it is just one less to guard." After this statement everyone laughed and went home. In this situation humor was used by the officers as a means of

reducing the emotional strain accompanying the murder of an inmate. By "laughing the violence away" personal involvement in murder is almost impossible.

In the refresher training course at Rocky Hill a story was recounted about an inmate who stabbed another inmate and staked him to the captain's desk. Even though the story is violent, the class laughed it off because as one officer stated "we did not have to go to far to find the killer." Again from this case one can see that humor is used in a matter of fact manner by the officers to lessen feelings of sympathy for the murdered inmate. Humor in such a violent environment functions as a "safety valve" (Coser, 1959). Humor is a "safety valve" because it helps to release tension and provides further insulation against the dangers of correctional work.

Rationalization. The third type of coping mechanism employed by the officers was a rationalization of inmate violence. For example, when homosexual rapes occurred many officers indicated during the interviews that "this kind of thing happens all the time and we cannot do anything about it." Or else if an inmate is stabbed or commits suicide a typical comment would be "that is just the way things are around here." By rationalizing death and violence as "just the way things are," the officers are fortifying their defense mechanisms that allow them to cope with emotional situations by totally withdrawing themselves from the situation at hand. Violence is a part of prison

life and by rationalizing violence after it has already occurred, the officers are preparing themselves to act calm when any crises situation arises.

In this section we examined the different ways in which officers "keep their emotions on ice." The telling of atrocity stories in formal training serves to prepare the new recruits for violence, but more importantly, the stories are a means of socializing the rookies so that they can learn to exhibit emotional detachment which is considered necessary for guard work. Emotional detachment is necessary for rookies and veterans alike. If they did not become detached, they probably would quit because their emotionalism would overwhelm them in the course of their duty. Yet remaining detached is not a sign of cynical behavior on the part of officers as some authors such as Mitford (1975) suggest. I think further research is needed that will examine at what point these mechanisms are internalized by the officers. In sum, officers like doctors, funeral home directors, and personnel in intensive care units are not incapable of being sensitive but the realities of their work situation dictates that their feelings be controlled.

In this chapter it was shown that correctional officers maintain they are professionals in "the people business." It was further pointed out that officers espouse this type of ideology in order to develop a favorable occupational self-image. That is, by saying they are professionals helping a client population, officers are reducing the stigma

of their low-status occupation. As members of the "helping profession" they can try to convince themselves and others that their work is satisfying. Then we saw how important symbols are in representing the officer's and prison administration's authority. Taken together physical symbols such as uniforms, expressive symbols such as being called "officer" by the inmates, and territorial symbols which represent places within the prison that are out-of-bounds for the inmates all help to show the inmates who is in charge of the prison while at the same time solidifying the inmates' position as a subordinate one. Last, it was shown that officers work in an unpredictable environment where violence is commonplace. For the officers to work in such an atmosphere and "keep their emotions on ice" they have to do one of three things: become totally enmeshed in their work role, rationalize the violence, or use humor to cope with violence in prison.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Restatement of the study

In the first chapter of this thesis it was pointed out that correctional officers were rarely mentioned in prison oriented research conducted by social scientists. If mentioned, the officers were characterized as sadistic, or performing a low-status occupation, or resistant to change and distrustful of outsiders. From this body of literature emerged the impetus for this thesis: to provide insight into how people become correctional officers. The data was analyzed using the following three stages: 1) an analysis of job histories prior to correctional work; 2) socialization into the guard role; and 3) an analysis of the guard role. Because of this thesis' concern for socialization processes and stages, a symbolic interactionist model was employed.

Next, in chapter two we examined the manner in which data was collected on the three stages. That is, due to symbolic interactionism's stress on the interactive process between humans, a methodological strategy which reflected this concern was employed. This thesis utilized the strategy of going to the field as a participant observer. It was my belief that in order to study correctional officers, I had to directly examine them in their work environment. In following this strategy I went to Rocky Hill State Penitentiary to participate in a two week

refresher training course for veteran officers. Once rapport with the seventeen class members had been established, I then asked each individual if I could interview him/her. Although there are a variety of interviewing strategies available to the social scientist, I employed the focused interview. The reason for this is because the previous summer I had worked as an officer at Oswald. In other words, focused interviewing is employed only when the researcher has previously analyzed the situation. Data was elicited from the officers that shed light upon the three stages which formulated the research problem.

Several months later, I contacted the Deputy Warden of Oswald State Penitentiary to ascertain if I could interview between seven and ten correctional officers. Arrangements were made and I employed the same interview strategy as at Rocky Hill to gain data on the three stages involved in becoming an officer.

Then in Chapter three it was shown that there was a process working that led these 25 individuals into correctional work. That is, we pointed out that people do not aspire to become officers. In fact, the interviewees chose to become officers later in life around the age of thirty-four. The process started with a turning point where old lines of action were halted. Once halted, the individuals took stock of their situation before revising old lines into new lines of action. However, Turning points were not enough by themselves to lead an individual into correctional work. It involved three other factors: 1) increasing age

which blocked other career avenues; 2) living close to the prison and having knowledge that the prisons were continuously short on help; and, 3) significant social relationships such as friends and relatives that encouraged these people to become officers. In took these four factors in conjunction to lead the interviewees into initial application for the job.

Next, after the person applied for the job and was hired, chapter four discussed the formal and informal socialization process that all new recurits experience. It was first pointed out in this chapter that not everyone can become officers because certain requirements such as age, education, and health need to be satisfied. Once satisfied the new recruits proceed through a formal training program where whether on-the-job (Rocky Hill) or a combination of classroom and field training (Oswald), the new recruits begin to learn what prison work is like. That is, through this training the new recruits are familiarized with the prison layout and how the institution operates. The recruits even get a small dose of dealing with the inmates. However, formal training by itself does not socialize the new recruits into the guard role. After formal training the new recruits are assigned to a permanent shift. Once the job begins informal socialization occurs. It is during actual work experience that rookies come to learn prison work. Through interaction with other officers the rookie soon learns that most promotions are based on favoritism and membership in cliques. Rookies also learn that some

officers are snitches, while others cannot be depended upon in confrontations with the inmates. We also saw that the inmates test new recruits to observe their reactions in specific situations. If fear is detected the inmates will try to unnerve that officer further. It was also pointed out that veteran officers test new recruits by observing how the rookie handles himself in confrontations with the inmates. If the officer passes, he is looked upon as a competent officer who can be trusted. Last we saw that there is not one type of guard style. Rather, each officer develops a personal style to meet the demands of the job. In sum, formal training gave the new recruits a small dose of what prison work is like, but it is through informal socialization that rookies learn the ropes.

In the fifth chapter we showed that correctional officers thought of themselves as professionals in the people business. The reason for this ideology is to develop a favorable occupational self-image. That is, by thinking of themselves as professionals helping a client population the officers are reducing the stigma of their low-status occupation. Next, it was shown how important symbols are in representing the officer's authority. Collectively physical, expressive and territorial symbols provide a display of power that showed the inmates that the officers were in charge of the prison. Yet at the same time these symbols reinforce the inmates position in prison as a subordinate one. Last, it was demonstrated that officers work in an

environment where inmate violence is a commonplace occurence. In order for the officers "to keep their emotions on ice," officers did one of three things: 1) manage the violence bureaucratically; 2) rationalize inmate aggression; or, 3) use humor to deal with inmate violence. Now that this study has been recapitulated, the next section will address the differences of this study from previous inquiries.

Variations From Past Research

In the course of this study five differences from past research on prisons and the people who work in them have surfaced. The first difference centers on the popular imagery surrounding correctional officers. Frequently officers are portrayed as cruel and cynical men who lack compassion for the inmate (Mitford, 1974). I found this may not be the case after all. In fact, officers like doctors and funeral home directors are required to manage their feelings regarding the people they serve. That is, officers must remain emotionally detached from the inmates or else they could not perform their job. Because the officers are detached does not mean they lack sympathy or compassion for the inmates. From the interviews all the officers pointed out that they sympathized with the young inmate who is homosexually abused or with the inmates who "need" to be paroled but instead serve long sentences. In sum, this view of officers as cruel and cynical people did not fit my cases.

The second discrepancy with the previous literature centers on

the popular belief that officers are fearful and distrustful of outsiders (Wicks, 1974). This certainly was not the case in my experience with correctional officers. When I went to Rocky Hill to interview the officers, rapport had been established in two days. In fact, I was regarded by the officers as another classmate. Then once the interviewing began I ascertained data on such "touchy" topics as guard snitching and the reasons why they disliked the prison administration. Furthermore, eight interviews were taped and these officers were not hesitant to answer the same "touchy" questions truthfully and by citing examples. Probably the best illustration negating that officers are fearful and distrust outsiders is when I interviewed officers at Oswald. Rapport was minimal because that was the first time I was meeting these officers. Despite a lack of rapport, these officers provided information supporting the data I obtained from officers at Rocky Hill. The twenty-five officers were not fearful or distrustful of this researcher who was an outsider, but eagerly informed me of what it is like to work in a maximum security prison.

The third difference is theoretical where functionalism and conflict theory proved to be inadequate models in explaining correctional officers. These models can only provide structural accounts as to why society needs and who becomes correctional officers. These models fail to take into consideration the interactive processes involved in becoming a correctional officer. For example, chapter four pointed out that it

is during informal socialization, or interaction with their peers, that rookies begin to learn the argot system, officers who are snitches, and those who cannot be depended upon. In sum, learning to become an officer is dependent upon interaction between humans and not something due to adaptations to structural conditions or structural conflict.

The fourth difference focuses upon the idea of prejudicial behavior on the part of correctional officers. Jacobs and Retsky (1977) pointed out that they found correctional officers were not openly prejudiced against black inmates. In my experience as an officer, as chapter four indicates, I found that many officers were openly prejudiced against black inmates. Although some officers referred to blacks as "niggers" in their presence, most officers confined their prejudicial remarks to other officers and not in the presence of black inmates.

The fifth and last variation deals with the uniform as a symbol of authority. According to Jacobs and Retsky (1977) and Roucek (1935) officer uniforms serve only one function: to distinguish officers from the inmate population. My research disagrees with theirs in that it was shown in chapter five that the officer's uniforms serves as a symbol of authority as well as highlighting the dominant-subordinate relationship in terms of guard/inmate encounters. Now that the variations of this study from previous research have been outlined, let us now address the similarities.

Agreement With Past Research

In order to discuss the many similarities between this and previous investigations, I will examine these corresponding findings in a chapter by chapter manner.

In the first chapter of this thesis it was shown that a symbolic interactionist framework was going to be employed. This type of model deals specifically with how stages and interaction with others lead to the development of the human organism. In keeping with this model it was pointed out that pot smokers as Becker (1973) suggest, learn how to notice the effects of the drug through interaction with veteran smokers. It was also demonstrated that prostitutes as Heyl (1977) proposes learn their trade through interaction with madame-teachers. This thesis supports this model due to the fact that becoming an officer depends upon formal training as well as interaction with other officers on the job. Through interaction with other officers, the rookie internalizes the guard role. It was shown in chapter two that besides supporting the symbolic interactionist framework, this thesis supports its methodological assumptions as well. That is, this thesis grew out of a interactionist body of literature that emphasizes an examination of the natural world in order to ascertain the subjective states of the individuals (Blumer, 1969: Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lofland, 1971). I followed this strategy of going to the field without a preformed model and was able to elicit data from the officers on the three stages enumerated in the problem statement.

Next, this thesis also supports Lofland (1966), Strauss (1969), and Cross (1973, 1977) in that turning points are crucial factors conducive to a revising of old lines into new lines of action. Chapter three showed that most people do not aspire to become correctional officers. Rather, a turning point such as being laid off or employment in a seasonal job made these people take stock of their situation. Once the old lines were disrupted in conjunction with increasing age, proximity to the prison's and encouragement from friends and relatives did these individuals see employment in corrections as a desirable alternative.

Then in chapter four it was shown that atrocity stories were functional. This finding supports Dingwall (1977) in that the stories not only made new recruits aware of what kinds of inmates were imprisoned but they also served to highlight the differences between the keeper and kept. Chapter four also indicated that racism was common among officers. My findings on this support Carroll (1974) as well as his (1974) reasoning as to why guards are prejudiced against black inmates. That is, guards are prejudiced because they have lost prestige and power in the prison which is interpreted in racial terms. In other words, black inmates are perceived by the officers as being defiant of prison rules and conspiring to undermine the guards' authority. Although guards areprejudice, it was also found that officers keep their prejudicial remarks to other officers. Most officers do not use racist terminology

in front of the black inmates. This finding supports Goffman's (1959) idea of backstage derogation where unkind remarks are kept hidden from the victim, and assuring that orderly interaction can be maintained.

Chapter four also proposed that formal training did not prepare new recruits for prison work. Because of this inadequacy thirteen recruits experienced some kind of reality shock. This finding supports Hughes (1952) and Cross (1973) in their previous research where reality shock is due to a failure in formal training or anticipatory training respectively. Furthermore, we saw that interaction with other officers provides the rookie with knowledge that most promotions are based on favoritism or membership in important cliques. This finding supports Jacobs and Retsky's (1977) research where favoritism is important for guard promotions and Becker's (1973) work where cliques are important in the advancement of jazz musicians from "small time" to "big time" bands.

Chapter four also demonstrated that most officers thought the job could be dangerous. This finding supports Jacobs and Retsky (1977) who found that Stateville officers also thought the job could be dangerous. Last of all it was pointed out that new officers are tested by both inmates and officers.

Excluding inmate testing, the testing of new recruits by veteran officers is dependent upon how the rookie handles himself in a confrontation with the inmates. Thus an officer has to prove himself to be

competent and trustworthy in the eyes of his peers. This finding supports Spergel (1964) and Miller (1972) where officers are similar to juvenile gang members who must also prove their competency to their fellow gang members in order to gain a "rep."

Then in chapter five we showed that 85% of the officers saw themselves as professionals helping a client population. By espousing professionalism, the officers are reducing the image the public has of them as being dumb and cruel. Also this "professionalism" rhetoric provides a rationale that motivates these people to continue working as an officer as well as reducing the effects of their low-status occupation. This finding supports Simpson and Simpson's (1959) research on psychiatric attendants who also developed a favorable occupational self-image by indicating that they like to take care of the patients. Last, it was demonstrated that officers work in an environment where inmate violence and death are common-place. Because of this environment officers must become emotionally detached from their job in a similar fashion as doctors (Becker, 1961), funeral home directors (Pine, 1975) and personnel in intensive care units become detached from the people they serve (Coombs and Goldman, 1973). We also saw that there were three different ways in which officers emotionally remove themselves from the job. The first was bureaucratic management. Here the officer manages his feelings by totally withdrawing himself into his work role thus shielding him from becoming emotionally involved with inmate violence. Next, officers

utilized humor to deal with aggression in prison. This finding supports Coser (1959) who found that humor was an important means of social distance used by workers in a hospital setting. Third, and last, the officers rationalized the inmate violence by saying "nothing can be done about it anyways." This finding supported Coombs and Goldman (1973) where personnel in an intensive care unit rationalize patient deaths by saying "it (death) was better for him anayways."

Avenues For Future Research

Since this thesis supports the theoretical assumptions and methodological strategies of symbolic interactionism, this model would be helpful in examining the following research problems: 1) an investigation into the processes that are conducive to leading women into correctional work; 2) analyze the effects that working in prison has on the family (providing the officer is married); and, 3) investigate the work relationships between male and female correctional officers. Although these are only a few areas where future research on officers is needed, the point remains clear: with the advent of future naturalistic inquiries we may better understand that working in a maximum security institution is a demanding job.

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CAREER CONTINGENCIES OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploratory inquiry into the processes involved in becoming a correctional officer. It was first pointed out that the literature surrounding officers was very negative. That is, officers were frequently stereotyped as being sadistic or dumb individuals. From this body of literature emerged the impetus for this thesis: to provide insight into how people become officers. Because of this thesis' concern for socialization processes and stages of development, a symbolic interactionist model was employed. At the same time, this model's methodological strategy of participant observation was employed to gather data. In following this strategy, I went to two midwestern state penitentiaries and interviewed a total of twenty-five officers. Although there are a wide variety of interviewing techniques available to the social scientist, I chose focused interviewing as the technique of data collection for this thesis. Once the data was collected it was analyzed using the following three stages: 1) An analysis of job histories prior to correctional work; 2) an analysis of how new recruits are socialized into the officer role; and, 3) an analysis of the officer role.

It was found that there was a process at work leading these individuals into correctional work. That is, it involved the following four factors: 1) a turning point such as being laid off; 2) increasing age which blocked entrance into other career avenues; 3) living close to

the prisons; and, 4) significant social relationships such as friends or relatives who encouraged the interviewees into initial application for the job. It took these four factors in conjunction to lead the interviewees into seeking correctional work as a new career.

Next, it was found that the formal training process experienced by all new recruits did not prepare them for the job. Rather the new recruits learned the ropes informally through interaction with veteran officers.

Last, it was found that officers think of themselves as professionals in order to develop a favorable occupational self-image. Next, it was shown that various types of symbols such as uniforms and gun towers not only represent the officer's authority but help to solidify the inmates' position in prison as a subordinate in prison as well. Then we demonstrated that officers work in a violent atmosphere and use humor, rationalizations, or bureaucratically manage the inmate violence in order to become emotionally detached from the inmates.